

**COMMERCIAL MUSIC-MAKING IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY  
NORTH-EAST ENGLAND: A PALE REFLECTION OF LONDON?**

**Volume I**

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**2001**

**ROSEMARY SOUTHEY**

**Department of Music**

# CONTENTS

## Volume 1

	Abstract	viii
	Quotation	ix
	Preface	x
	Notes	xxi
	Abbreviations	xxii
Chapter 1	Culture and Urban Development in Eighteenth century England	1
	I The influence of London	1
	II Travelling North	8
Chapter 2	The Music Profession in the North-East: 1700	18
	I Durham	18
	II Newcastle	24
	III York	31
	IV Peripatetic musicians	36
Chapter 3	The establishment of subscription series in York and Newcastle	41
	I Early concerts	41
	II First subscription series	46
	III Ambitious plans and financial restraints	54
Chapter 4	Consolidation	61
	I York – resident musicians and the subscription series	61
	II Avison and visitors to Newcastle	70
Chapter 5	Co-operation and Competition in Durham	83
	I The Choir Concert	83
	II John Garth and the Gentlemen’s Subscription Concert	89
	III Gentlemen versus clerics	95
Chapter 6	‘That Flood of Nonsense’: Summer Concerts in Newcastle	103
	I Wrangles and rivals	103
	II Spring Gardens	111
Chapter 7	New Blood: Changes in Durham and York	124
	I Reconciliation in Durham, 1760-1770	124
	II Changing personnel in York	133
	III Development of supply services in York	139
	IV A passion for oratorios	141

Chapter 8	Prospective heirs: Newcastle after the death of Charles Avison	150
	I The actress and the dancing masters	150
	II Native sons	155
	III Durham musicians	161
	IV The pupil	165
Chapter 9	Financial imperatives	172
	I Matthias Hawdon and the choir from Durham	172
	II Bankruptcy	179
	III ‘Such majestic ability’	181
	IV ‘One deserving the greatest encouragement’	186
	V ‘On the most reasonable terms’	194
Chapter 10	The supremacy of Durham	200
	I Newcastle concerts, 1781-3	200
	II Competition	203
	III Decline and death	212
Chapter 11	York: 1770-1789	218
	I Musical societies in York and the North-East	218
	II The winter subscription series, 1770-1781 – from Gentlemen Amateurs to professional musicians	222
	III Continuing difficulties in the subscription series – 1782-85	229
Chapter 12	Theatre music and musicians in the second half of the eighteenth century	236
	I The companies and their repertoire	236
	II The performers	242
	III Tate Wilkinson and the band of the York company	246
	IV Rank and file musicians	250
	V Guest players	250
	VI Participation of theatre personnel in commercial concerts	252
	VII Too much success	255
Chapter 13	A slow decline: York concert life, 1785-1800	259
	I The Hudsons take over	259
	II The London Commemoration and local festivals	263
	III Financial difficulties	268
	IV Hudson’s withdrawal from concert promotion	273

Chapter 14	Durham in the 1790s	276
	I Withdrawal from Sunderland	276
	II 'A new encouragement to piety'	279
	III The abandonment of concerts in Durham	285
	IV The decline of the choir	287
	V 'Well known as a musical composer'	291
Chapter 15	Revival: Newcastle 1789-95	294
	I Attempts at subscription series, 1789-94	294
	II Domestic music-making and music sellers	306
	III Musical composition and publishing	313
	IV Waits and bands	316
Chapter 16	'War's Alarms': Newcastle 1795-1803	319
	I The Volunteer Band	310
	II Subscription series, 1798-1803	327
	III Peace	338
Chapter 17	Conclusions	343
	I The North-East in 1800	343
	II Gentlemen Amateurs and commercial concert-giving	348
	III Regional movement of musicians	351
	IV Networks of musicians and their effect on the spread of repertoire	352
	V The influence of London	354
	VI Further issues to be explored	358
	VII The standing of 'provincial' musicians	360
	Bibliography	363

## Volume II

Biographical Index		
Appendix 1	Sample programmes	47
Appendix 2	Charles Avison's music and writings	73
Appendix 3	Known compositions of Thomas Wright of Newcastle	76
Appendix 4	Known publications by William Wright	84
Appendix 5	Winter subscription series	85
Appendix 6	Eighteenth century singing men at Durham Cathedral and their origins	99
Appendix 7	Organists in Newcastle, Durham and York	93
Appendix 8	Maps	95
Appendix 9	Comparative survey of repertoire in Newcastle subscription series	99



## ILLUSTRATIONS

Plate 1	Masthead from the Newcastle Courant, May 1724/5	Frontispiece, Vol. 1
Plate 2	Masthead from the York Courant, March 1737/8	7
Plate 3	Map of Durham by T. Forster (1754)	19
Plate 4	View of St. Nicholas's Church, Newcastle by W. Horseley (1715)	25
Plate 5	Charles Avison: painting probably by F. Lindo	40
Plate 6	The Great Assembly Room, Blake Street, York	47
Plate 7	James Nares (engraving by W. Ward)	62
Plate 8	Title page of first edition of <i>An Essay on Musical Expressioni</i>	71
Plate 9	Spencer Cowper, Dean of Durham Cathedral	82
Plate 10	Dedication page of the first volume of Garth's <i>Marcello's Psalms</i>	100
Plate 11	Advertisement for Spring Gardens, Newcastle, 1767	102
Plate 12	Plan of Spring Gardens from Oliver's <i>Plan of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne</i> (1830) and detail from Hutton's <i>Plan of Newcastle upon Tyne</i> (1772)	120
Plate 13	Advertisement for John Camidge's benefit, York, 1770	135
Plate 14	Advertisement for Leeds Oratorios	143
Plate 15	The Iron Bridge, Sunderland (engraving by E. More)	162
Plate 16	The New Assembly Rooms on Westgate Road, Newcastle	168
Plate 17	Subscriber's ticket for Newcastle subscription series (Blank discovered in back pocket of a 1777 diary belonging to Thomas Bewick and probably engraved by him.)	171
Plate 18	<i>Fanny of the Dale</i> by Thomas Wright: originally performed at the Newcastle theatre, 13 April 1785	190
Plate 19	Opening page of <i>A favorite Concerto for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte with Accompaniments</i> by William Evance	199
Plate 20	Advertisement for York subscription series, 1775	217
Plate 21	Advertisements for concerts in York, 1784	233
Plate 22	The Theatre Royal, Newcastle	235
Plate 23	Playbill for a performance at Newcastle's Theatre Royal, 1794, including a concert on the stage	241
Plate 24	Advertisement for John Donaldson, 1797	258
Plate 25	Title page of John Peacock's collection of tunes for the Northumberland small pipes, edited by Thomas Wright and published by his brother in Newcastle, 1801	293
Plate 26	Advertisement for William Wright's music shop, 1799	310

Plate 27	Two tunes from Abraham Mackintosh's <i>A Collection of Strathspeys, Reels, Jigs, &amp;c.</i> (after 1798)	314
Plate 28	Opening of Thomas Wright's <i>Grand Troop</i> , composed for one of the local Volunteer Bands (after 1795)	318
Plate 29	Playbill for Thomas Wright's ballad opera <i>Roderick Random</i> , performed at Newcastle's Theatre Royal, December 1797	329
Plate 30	Handbill for Newcastle subscription concert, 29 October 1801	336
Plate 31	Song by Thomas Thompson, published in Newcastle around 1802	342
Plate 32	Manuscript music book, c1745, understood to belong to Charles Avison; in possession of Thomas Wright of Newcastle at his death in 1819	Frontispiece, Vol. II

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Plates 8, 10, 17, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 are reproduced by kind permission of Newcastle Central Library.

Plate 9 is taken from Edward Hughes (ed.), *Letters of Spencer Cowper, Dean of Durham Cathedral 1746-1774*, Surtees Society, 165 (London/Durham: Andrews/Quaritch, 1956).

Plate 3 is reproduced from a map in the possession of the Chapter Archives, Durham Cathedral.

Plate 6 is taken from *Georgian Public Buildings in York* (York: York Georgian Society, 1975).

Plate 15 is taken from R. Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, IV (1840).

Plates 16 and 22 are taken from E. Mackenzie, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne, including the Borough of Gateshead* (Newcastle: Mackenzie and Dent, 1827).

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## ABSTRACT

Musical life in the North-East of England during the eighteenth century is known almost exclusively for the work of Charles Avison, composer of a large number of concertos and writer of a notable book on music – *An Essay on Musical Expression*. But Avison was only one of a large number of musicians based in the region during the century; this thesis aims to reconstruct a more comprehensive picture of commercial musical activities – including concert-promotion, teaching, tuning and composition – in the three main centres of Newcastle, Durham and York and in some smaller local towns. It examines the links between musicians both within the region and outside it, and the extent to which those links affected the repertoire composed and performed in the area. Moreover, it looks at the connections between the region and London and seeks to establish the degree to which musical activity in the region was ‘provincial’. Was North-Eastern musical life during the eighteenth century merely a pale reflection of musical life in the capital or did it have a character of its own? Using principally contemporary primary sources such as newspapers, diaries, Corporation records, ecclesiastical records, theatre and Assembly Room account books and parish registers, this thesis demonstrates that the North-East region of England was, throughout the century, an area of considerable activity, involving both professional musicians and so-called Gentlemen Amateurs, and was by no means a backwater.

As none but the highest mountains and most lofty promontories of a country are visible at a great distance, so none but the most towering and exalted characters of a remote age are prominent to posterity. In proportion as we recede from any period of time, inferior actors, however they may have distinguished themselves to their contemporaries, are rendered invisible, and, like telescopic stars, can only be discovered by the assistance of art. In Musical History, therefore, it is only a few protuberant and gigantic characters that the general eye can see stalking at a distance. History, indeed, sometimes lends her hand to a deserving name, that has been obscured or eclipsed by accident or injustice, and lifts it from oblivion.

Charles Burney, *A General History of Music* (London: 1776), p. 61.

# PREFACE

This study grew out of an undergraduate course on British musical life in the eighteenth century, which involved original research into Newcastle newspapers of the time. Newcastle's musical life in the eighteenth century is famous almost entirely for the activities of Charles Avison but even a brief examination of the newspapers showed how limited this view is. Here were a dozen other men,<sup>1</sup> who not only made a living from musical activities but seemed to thrive. Take Thomas Wright, for instance, active in Newcastle in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. He first appeared in advertisements as a clarinettist but over a period of four or five years seemed to participate in almost every musical activity possible – leading bands in every type of concert, promoting concerts himself and singing in them, composing for and playing in the theatre, teaching and taking on an organist's post at a local church. Moreover, he did

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<sup>1</sup> Women figure only rarely in North-Eastern musical life during the eighteenth century.

not confine himself to Newcastle but also performed in concerts in Durham, Sunderland, Morpeth and Tynemouth.

Wright was not unique. Not only do a number of other men seem to have paralleled his activities in Newcastle but musicians were also active in Durham and in smaller towns in the area. Yet these men never appear in histories of the period; in many writings, the distinct impression given is that Avison was the *only* musician working in the area during the eighteenth century. Attempts are rarely made to place Avison in context or to gauge how typical he was, or was not, of eighteenth century musicians in the region. Was he really as dominant as he seems now?

This thesis was originally conceived as an attempt to gauge the full extent of musical activity in the region during the eighteenth century, to understand the daily lives of provincial professional musicians and to place Charles Avison in his milieu rather than to look at him isolated from it. In the course of research, it became obvious that a number of other issues needed to be considered. A surprisingly large number of musicians, it transpired, were well-travelled, both in search of a permanent job or niche and, after finding such a post, during their everyday work. In the course of this travelling, musicians formed links – through pupil-teacher relationships, personal contracts and letter writing – with other musicians inside and outside the region; did these links have an effect on concert-life and composition? Did the region have links with London and fashionable musical life there and, if so, what was the nature of those links? Was the cultural life of the North-East merely, as some historians suggest, a pale reflection of the capital's, or did it have a character of its own? How 'provincial' was it? Was it behind the times or, conversely up-to-date?

Until relatively recently, little research has been devoted to commercial music-making in the English provinces. The large number of sources available about London's

music-making and a lingering centralism have produced an emphasis on music-making in the capital, and, less understandably, a tendency to assume that music in the provinces must have been a copy, writ small, of that of London. Recent work has attempted to redress the balance somewhat; the research of, for instance, David Griffiths on York and Trevor Fawcett on Norwich, amongst others, has revealed musical lives that imposed their own local character on the basic building blocks so familiar from London: subscription and benefit concerts, oratorios and festivals, ancient and modern music.<sup>2</sup> But this work has tended to explore discrete areas;<sup>3</sup> even Jenny Burchell in her book *Polite or Commercial Concerts? Concert Management and Orchestral Repertoire in Edinburgh, Bath, Oxford, Manchester and Newcastle, 1730-1799* is more concerned to look at the differing characters of musical activity in the five cities than to explore links between either the centres or the musicians in them.<sup>4</sup>

In this dissertation, I will look at a wider area – the North-East of England, comprising three large centres (Newcastle, Durham and York) and a number of smaller towns (Hull, Whitby, Darlington, Sunderland, Morpeth) – with a view to establishing firstly, the extent of local music-making and its nature, and, secondly, the extent to which this music-making was influenced by links within the area and outside it, particularly with London. Chapter One sets the background; it briefly examines research into the rise of cultural activities in the eighteenth century and in particular the links between these activities and the growth of urban centres – it will also establish the historical and social background of each of the three main centres of the study. Chapter

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<sup>2</sup> D. Griffiths, *A Musical Place of the First Quality: A History of Institutional Music-Making in York, c1550-1990* (York: York Settlement Trust, n.d.).

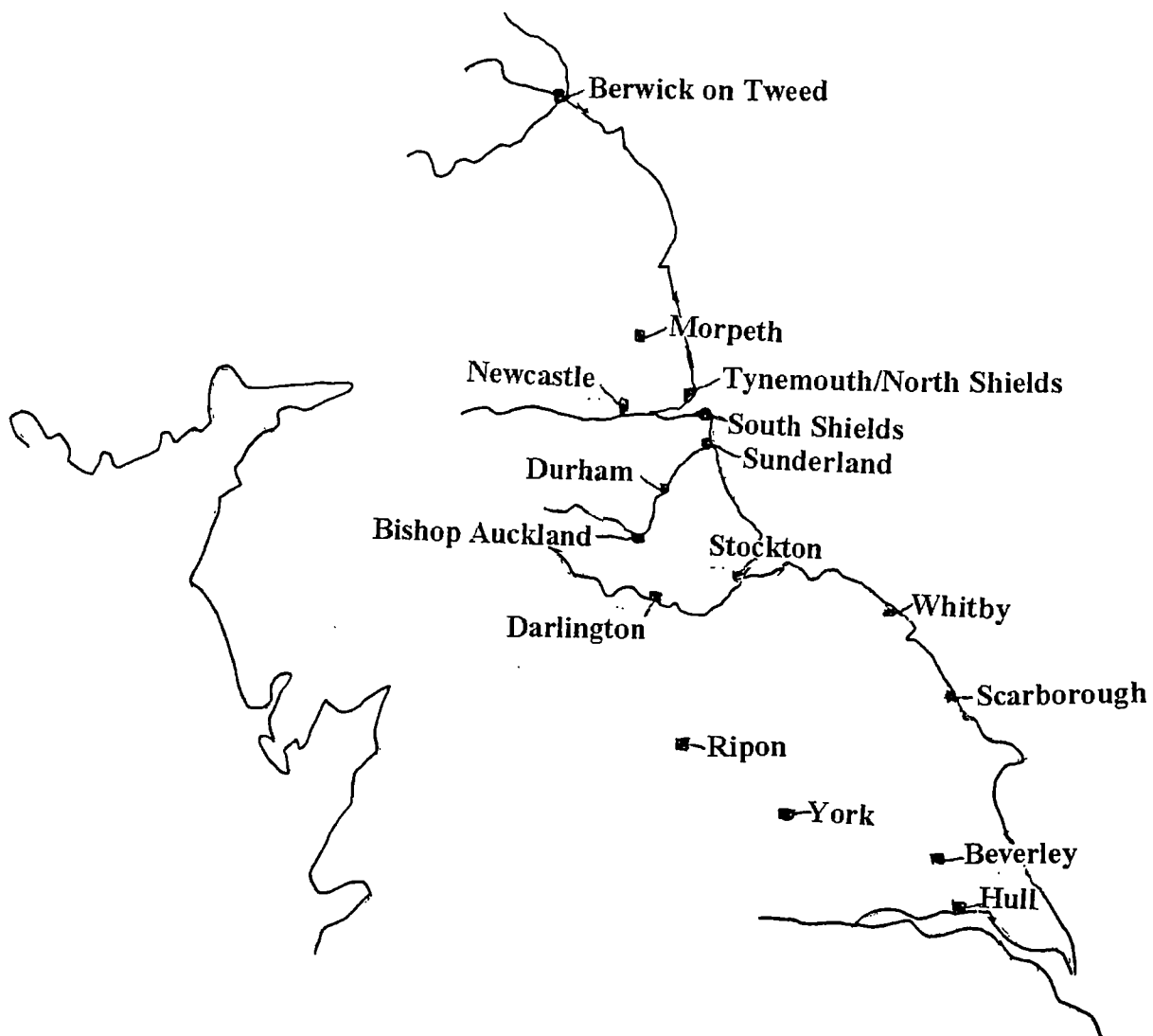
<sup>3</sup> Trevor Fawcett included some material on musical activity in the smaller towns of Norfolk. [Trevor Fawcett, *Music in Eighteenth-Century Norwich and Norfolk* (Norwich: Centre of East Anglian Studies, 1979)].

<sup>4</sup> J. Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts? Concert Management and Orchestral Repertoire in Edinburgh, Bath, Oxford, Manchester and Newcastle, 1730-1799* (New York and London: Garland, 1996).



Two examines the state of musical life in the region in 1700. The nature and extent of that life throughout the eighteenth century, the various activities undertaken and the people involved will be detailed in succeeding chapters, with particular emphasis on the connections between the main centres, in the form of pupil-teacher relationships, personal contacts, musical collaboration and competition, and so on, and the effect, if any, this had on the repertoire heard at local concerts and on musical life in general. The influence of London and the connections of provincial musicians with the capital are also considered. Finally, the last chapter looks at the state of commercial musical activity in 1800 with a brief glance at the events of the early nineteenth century; this chapter also considers what conclusions can be drawn about commercial music-making in the area during the eighteenth century. In a separate volume, a number of appendices provide supplementary data. A Biographical Index lists all musicians, resident or visiting, known to have worked in the region during the eighteenth century; a selection of concert programmes taken from advertisements in local papers or from handbills provided for the night allows an overview of the kind of repertoire heard by northern audiences. (Appendix 1) Further appendices include: works composed by Charles Avison and by Thomas Wright, music published in Newcastle at the end of the century, organists active in the area, the origins of singing men at Durham Cathedral, and maps of the area indicating major venues.

A number of terms require definition. The choice of a *region* to study is itself problematic. The term *North-East* would have had little or no meaning to local residents in the eighteenth century. Alan Everitt points out that:



Map Pre.1: Geographical area covered by this study.

almost all our current regional terms in this country are of very recent origin ... behind most of our modern expressions, ideas and preconceptions lie implicit that were not necessarily of much significance to the people of earlier centuries.<sup>5</sup>

He suggests that in some circumstances it may be more profitable to think in terms of the French *pays*, roughly translatable as *country* – this is in fact a term used by a number of people connected with the northern counties.<sup>6</sup> In the absence of any clear definition therefore of *North-East*, the area covered by this dissertation has of necessity been dictated to a large degree by practical considerations, principally the survival of evidence and its accessibility. The original intention was to concentrate on the three large centres of Newcastle, Durham and York but one of the many pleasant surprises associated with this project has been the extent to which it has been found possible to examine musical life (particularly towards the end of the century) in smaller towns such as Darlington and Sunderland.<sup>7</sup>

A definition of *commercial musical activity* is also difficult. At its loosest, the term might be applied to all those activities for which musicians were paid. The promotion of public concerts (and performance in them) is the most obvious manifestation of these activities and must to a certain extent dominate discussion merely because of the amount of information that survives about the topic, but it should always be remembered that for most musicians the bread-and-butter activities of teaching and tuning and the selling of musical instruments were probably more important and that these are often the activities about which little evidence remains. Musicians also took on

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Everitt, 'Country, County and Town: Patterns of Regional Evolution in England' in P. Borsay, *The Eighteenth-Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History, 1688-1820*, (London: Longman, 1990), p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>7</sup> Sunderland was in fact larger than Durham (approximately 13,000 population to Durham's 7,000 at the end of the eighteenth century). Surviving evidence suggests that it may have had a much more extensive musical life, at least in the second half of the century and possibly in the earlier part as well, than it is at present possible to reconstruct.

posts as organists and waits, acted as parish clerks or dancing masters, or, in some cases, supplemented their income with other, non-musical, activities. The close involvement of organists in the secular music-making of the towns and cities in which they lived has made a certain amount of comment on their activities necessary (particularly in Durham); no attempt will be made, however, to examine music performed in church services or composed for such purposes. Neither will this study examine, except in passing, the activities of ballad singers and fiddlers, even though they were clearly working for financial reward and could therefore be classed as professional musicians. In part, this is owing to a lack of evidence, in part, to the intention of this study to examine *high* or *art* music, rather than folk music; however these people, where known, are included in the Biographical Index in Volume II. It should be noted, however, that these people may have had an indirect effect on *art* music; the use of folk melodies, particularly Scottish songs, in concertos or other works was prevalent (Appendix 3) and folk songs were relatively frequently sung at concerts. (Appendix 1)

Private concerts – that is, concerts held in private houses with no cost of admission, for the entertainment of a group of friends (such as those held by the Sharp family in the College at Durham Cathedral), or those concerts held by local musical societies to which only members were admitted – are difficult to document; frequently all that is known is that they did indeed take place. In view of this paucity of evidence, it was tempting to eliminate them entirely from discussion here. However, they represented a considerable source of income for some musicians, particularly the less prominent players who made up such bodies as the Country Dance Band of Newcastle;<sup>8</sup> moreover, the gentlemen at whose houses these concerts were often held – the so-called Gentlemen Amateurs – were frequently involved in the organisation and financing of

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 15.

public concerts which were open to anyone who chose to pay for admission. Private concerts, therefore, will be mentioned where relevant to public activities and where evidence allows.

The sources used to construct a picture of the musical activity within the area are almost all primary sources. A surprisingly large range of documents, frequently previously unexamined, has survived. The most extensive are newspapers which published advertisements, reviews and snippets of biographical information about individual musicians. A total of five different newspapers cover the century from 1711 onwards for Newcastle; these also include information on Durham and surrounding small towns. There is no year without at least one surviving newspaper. The most comprehensive of these newspapers, and the longest-lived was the *Newcastle Courant*; this has therefore been used as the principal source with other papers supplying extra or missing data.<sup>9</sup> In York, the *York Courant* survives from 1722 and the *York Chronicle* provides additional coverage for the 1790s. A wide range of other sources – many of them not primarily musical – allow a sometimes astonishingly full account of activities to be constructed. Corporation records in both Newcastle and York supply evidence of the appointment and conditions of service of waits and (in Newcastle) of most city organists. Assembly Room minutes and account books, and theatre account books give information on lesser-known musicians of whom almost no information survives elsewhere, as do parish registers – a number of musicians are known only from the recording of the baptisms or deaths of their children. Ecclesiastical records are informative about the many church musicians who took part in commercial music-making – particularly significant when dealing with the situation in Durham where the

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<sup>9</sup> Concert information was frequently inserted in all papers; reference to advertisements in the *Newcastle Courant* should not therefore imply that they were absent from other papers.

organist and choir of Durham Cathedral were for a large part of the century pre-eminent in secular music-making. Diaries and letters often provide some of the few first-hand accounts of local concerts and occasionally afford a glimpse of the personalities behind the names. Playbills – in both Newcastle and York – give a glimpse of theatrical repertoire and the activities of some of the most mobile of eighteenth century musicians – the professionals of the theatre band. In addition, the discovery of previously unknown handbills – in effect, concert programmes – in Newcastle for the last decades of the century has allowed the reconstruction of three or four subscription series and permitted conclusions to be drawn about the format, organisation and repertoire of the series.

Extensive and informative as these sources are, certain problems associated with them cannot be ignored. Not all sources are complete – the *York Courant*, for instance, has occasional missing years, particularly in the 1750s. No Corporation records at all survive for Durham thanks to a lack of shelf-space in the early nineteenth century which prompted officials to carry out a massive spring-clean; as a result, virtually nothing can be said of waits in Durham throughout the eighteenth century. The nature of the sources may also hamper the musicologist. Newspapers in the early part of the century were far more concerned to bring the reader up-to-date with national and international news than to supply him with information on local happenings, which the editors may have presumed he knew already. Individual musicians reacted in different ways to the question of publicity; some always advertised, some never. Charles Avison in Newcastle, for instance, never advertised more than time, place and price of his concert series at its opening in October; later in the century, his pupil, Matthias Hawdon, advertised every concert, frequently with a detailed programme. These differences may have owed more to external factors than to personality. Avison's reticence may have

been owing to a feeling that his audience would have known what to expect, Hawdon's expenditure to an urgent need to attract an audience to a failing enterprise. Likewise in York, advertisements for the subscription series become more frequent at a time when public demand was falling; the musicologist is therefore in the ironic position of knowing far more about unsuccessful series than successful ones. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the advertisement of a concert does not necessarily mean that it took place, or that it took place in the advertised form; some newspaper advertisements for Newcastle concerts late in the century conflict with handbills given out on the night.

Bias must also be considered when examining these records. Almost all surviving information about the Gentlemen's Subscription Concert (1752-60) in Durham, for instance, emanates from the Dean of Durham Cathedral who was vehemently, and often rudely, opposed to it. The bias towards vocal music and singers meant that even such distinguished visitors as Felice Giardini and Salomon were passed over briefly in reviews while lesser-known vocal soloists are extensively lauded. And in all cases, the original compilers of individual sources were not writing for posterity or for future musicologists, and are frequently silent on just the points of most interest – Corporation minutes describe the dismissal of waits without explanation, Assembly Room accounts record payments to musicians without naming them and concert advertisements frequently fail to list programmes.

Perhaps the most surprising outcomes of this study have been, firstly, the amount of information it has been possible to discover about individual musicians (see Biographical Index), and, secondly, the discovery of the astonishing amount of composition that took place, particularly in Newcastle, in the course of the century.

Some of this still survives in hidden strong-rooms of the various libraries throughout the region; one of the persistent joys of research has been the production by library staff of small, beautifully preserved copies of these compositions.<sup>10</sup> I would like to acknowledge my thanks to the staff at the following record offices and libraries: the Northumberland, Durham and York Record Offices; the Chapter Archives, Durham; the University of Durham Archives and Special Collections; York Minister Library; the Borthwick Institute, York; Newcastle and York Central Libraries; Hull, Morpeth, Sunderland, North Shields, South Shields, Carlisle, Hexham, and Tynemouth Libraries. I am indebted to Dr. Donald Burrows for access to the diaries of the Harris family, and the light they throw on mid-century activity in Durham. Dr. Brian Crosby's comments on the Durham materials have been most helpful, as have the comments of Dr. David Griffiths on the York chapters. Particular thanks are owing to Dr. Jenny Burchell for sparking my original interest in the subject and to Dr. Eric Cross for his invaluable help in tirelessly reading and rereading chapters of this dissertation and for giving much generous and pertinent advice.

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<sup>10</sup> For an detailed account of composition in Newcastle in the last two decades of the century, see R. Southey, 'Compositional Activity in Newcastle upon Tyne at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century', *The Consort* (Journal of the Dolmetsch Foundation), Summer 2000, Vol. 56, pp. 17-32.



## NOTES

All quotes taken from original sources have been used with their original spelling and punctuation, even when highly idiosyncratic. Where additions have been necessary to clarify the sense, they are enclosed within square brackets. These have also been used in concert programmes to indicate performers, where known. No attempt has been made to convert financial data – the cost of tickets, salaries and so on – into current monetary values or to suggest equivalent costs. Some idea of the price of goods or the value of salaries can be obtained by bearing in mind that the average wage for a labourer in the region at the time was about one shilling a day; the master of the Grammar School in Newcastle received £150 a year from the Corporation. As a vicar, however, he had (many) other sources of income. In the pre-decimal system of coinage, 12 pence (12d.) made one shilling (1s.); 20 shillings made a pound (sometimes written as 1l.). A guinea was £1 1s.

Until around the late 1730s, the year began on 25 March; the first three months of the year were considered to belong to what in modern usage would be the previous year. Thus a document dated 20 February 1711 in fact belongs to 20 February 1712. I have followed the customary practice of indicating both years: i.e. 20 February 1711/2.

Almost all the research for this study was completed before the new version of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* was published. A random search of the new online edition indicates that most of the entries for musicians involved in this study are little changed; I have therefore retained the references to the 1980 edition.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ASA	Assembly Room Accounts, York
ASM	Assembly Room Minutes, York
BI	Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York
CA	Dean and Chapter Archives, Durham
CAN	Chamberlain's Accounts, Newcastle
CAY	Chamberlain's Accounts, York
CL	Central Library, Newcastle
Co. Co.	Common Council minutes, Newcastle
<i>CP</i>	<i>Cumberland Pacquet</i>
CYM	Chamberlain's Accounts, York Minster
DAB	Dean and Chapter Act Books, Durham
DMA	Mayor's Accounts, Durham
DRO	Durham Record Office
<i>EC</i>	<i>Edinburgh Evening Courant</i>
<i>NA</i>	<i>Newcastle Advertiser</i>
<i>NC</i>	<i>Newcastle Courant</i>
<i>NCh</i>	<i>Newcastle Chronicle</i>
<i>NG</i>	<i>Newcastle Gazette</i>
<i>NI</i>	<i>Newcastle Intelligencer</i>
<i>NJ</i>	<i>Newcastle Journal</i>
NRO	Northumberland Record Office
TA	Treasurer's Accounts, Durham Cathedral
TAWS	Tyne and Wear Archive Service, Newcastle
<i>YC</i>	<i>York Courant</i>
<i>YCh</i>	<i>York Chronicle</i>
YCL	York Central Library
YHB	House Books of York Corporation
YML	York Minster Library
YMS	York Musical Society minute books
YRO	York Record Office

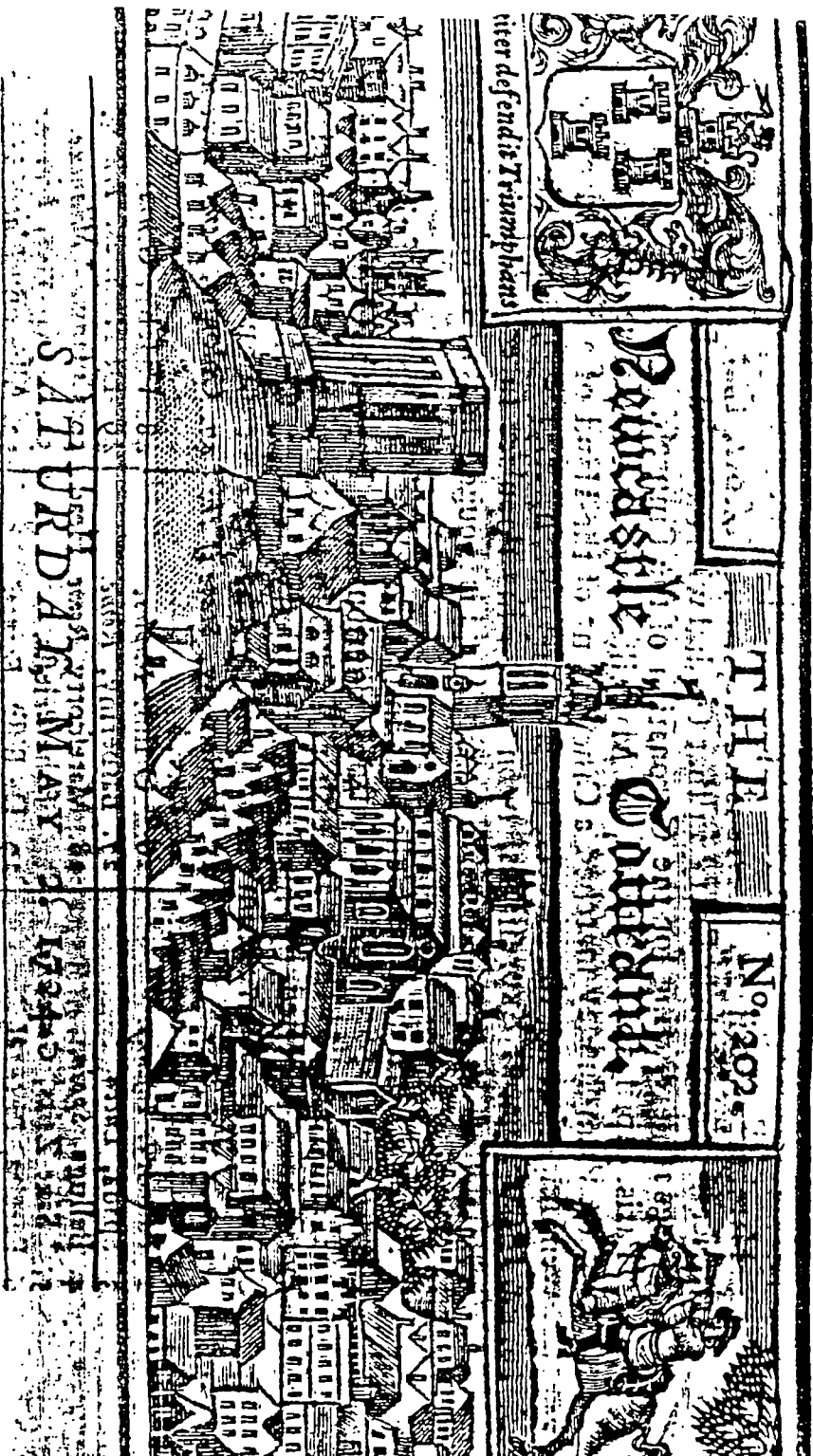


Plate 1: Masthead from the *Newcastle Courant* [NC 2 May 1724-5].

# 1

## CULTURE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

### I: The influence of London

The key fact about provincial opinion in the eighteenth century is that ... it repudiated its own provinciality. Painfully aware that they existed in the shadow of the metropolis, provincials' prime aim was to assimilate metropolitan culture and values. Provincial culture was more imitation than innovation. The *gradus ad Parnassum* from rudeness to refinement was in effect the mental journey from provinciality to London ... at least the more 'respectable' provincials might be improved by the percolation of London style and *mores*: 'the several great cities, and we might add many poor county towns, seem to be universally little *Londons* of the part of the Kingdom wherein they are situated'. No wonder a Newcastle address to the metropolitan rules had stated, 'Our eyes are upon you; we ... imitate your fashions, good and evil, and from you we fetch and frame our opinions'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. Porter, 'Science, provincial culture and public opinion in Enlightenment England', *The Eighteenth-Century Town, A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820*, ed. Peter Borsay (London: Longman, 1990), pp. 243-267 (pp. 251-2).

For historian Roy Porter, *imitation* and *emulation* are the key words in understanding provincial culture in eighteenth-century England. He writes:

the impulse chiefly came from the pacesetters of the provincial community aping metropolitan institutions and values. Provincial towns named their pleasure gardens Ranelagh and Vauxhall. Theatres were called Drury Lane ... Burghers adopted Handel as the staple of regional musical life hard on his oratorio triumphs in London.<sup>2</sup>

Provincial culture, for Porter, is merely a 'weak copy' of London culture, governed by a provincial elite with snobbish aspirations to prove their own good taste and worth.

The growth of cultural activities within urban areas during the eighteenth century, and Porter's views of London's influence upon it, has been the subject of much debate in recent years. It is undeniable that throughout this period London was the largest city in England by a considerable margin; its population of around half a million in 1700 represented about a tenth of the country's total population.<sup>3</sup> At this time, few other urban centres came anywhere near its size. It has been estimated that four-fifths of other conurbations had populations of less than two thousand; towns of between 2,500 and 10,000 inhabitants accounted for only 7½% of the urban population. Although this situation changed radically during the eighteenth century – by 1801 towns of middle size held 20% of the population – London retained its pre-eminence with a constant 10% of the total.<sup>4</sup>

The expansion of middle-range towns was chiefly caused by migration. Peter Clark has estimated that between 1660 and 1730 approximately two out of every three people moved parish at least once in their lives.<sup>5</sup> Most immigrants moved only short distances, in search of jobs or of higher wages, mainly moving from the countryside into nearby

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<sup>2</sup> Porter, 'Science, provincial culture', p.252.

<sup>3</sup> Borsay, *Eighteenth-Century Town*, Introduction, pp. 1-38 (pp. 4-5).

<sup>4</sup> Idem.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Clark, 'Migration in England during the late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Past and Present*, 83, (1979), pp. 57-90.

towns. More adventurous migration was not unknown, however; Newcastle's Scottish community, for instance, was substantial.<sup>6</sup> In addition, a short-term migration was also extensively practised, as local gentry families came into the urban centres for supplies or services which they could not obtain in the countryside. Towns and cities offered legal and financial services, food markets, trading in both everyday and luxury items, inns and coaching facilities; all these enhanced the attractions of urban centres for local gentry whose visits in turn increased the growth of the services. Towns and cities then sought to attract gentry families and their wealth by improving the quality of urban facilities – housing, paving, street lighting and so on.<sup>7</sup> The development of leisure activities – theatrical entertainments, open-air walks, concerts, horse races and other attractions – was an inevitable corollary, intended to encourage visitors to prolong their stay and spend more.

The part played by London in this growth was, according to some authorities, considerable. Peter Clark sees London as a stimulus to urban development elsewhere – 'the scale and sophistication of metropolitan demand ... almost certainly gave a boost to urban industrial specialisation'.<sup>8</sup> This remark has a particular application to Newcastle upon Tyne where the growth of the coal trade since the middle of the sixteenth century had stimulated both the growth of the city area and its population (from around 5000 in 1520 to around 16,000 in 1700)<sup>9</sup> and the establishment of other businesses such as maritime industries, salt production and glass blowing (utilising sand brought back as ballast in empty coal barges).<sup>10</sup> E. Anthony Wrigley sees London as 'the central market and distribution point for many provincial industries well into the late eighteenth-

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<sup>6</sup> Joyce Ellis, 'A dynamic society: social relations in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1660-1760', in *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns*, ed. Peter Clark (London: Hutchinson, 1984), pp. 190-227, (p. 209).

<sup>7</sup> P. Clark, *Transformation*, Introduction, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> E. Anthony Wrigley, 'Urban growth and agricultural change: England and the Continent in the early modern period', in *Eighteenth-Century Town*, pp. 39-82 (p. 42).

<sup>10</sup> Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

century'; he calls London's influence 'the leaven of change' although he adds that 'it is ... no part of this argument that the growth of London in the century before 1750 was the sole engine of change in the country'.<sup>11</sup> Other commentators are more cautious: Peter Borsay, in his introduction to one of Porter's articles, remarks:

Porter argues that this cultural resurgence was highly derivative, slavishly imitating London tastes and values. Does he overstate the influence of the metropolis, perhaps a little too influenced in his conclusions by the overtly cosmopolitan resort of Bath, and too little by the more regionally orientated county towns and provincial capitals?<sup>12</sup>

It is true to say that a surprisingly large number of English men and women had visited London at least once in their lives – Peter Clark suggests a figure of one in every six adults.<sup>13</sup> Most of these were young with few commitments; townspeople were more likely to visit the metropolis than country people and professional men more likely than any other class.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, for many, this was not a permanent move but a temporary stay, however prolonged.<sup>15</sup> On their departure from London they might be expected to take back to the provinces with them new ideas and attitudes, thus spreading the influence of London's culture and customs.

Eighteenth-century commentators unquestionably perceived such a process to be taking place, but saw it as having a deleterious effect. 'London was seen as a destroyer of men, of social order, of rural prosperity';<sup>16</sup> one writer in 1754 commented that:

London has grown, and continues still to grow, out of compass, at the expense of, and to the sensible diminution of the other towns and boroughs.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy, 1650-1750', in *Towns in Societies, Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology*, ed. Philip Abrams, E.A. Wrigley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 215-243 (p. 221).

<sup>12</sup> Borsay, *Eighteenth-Century Town*, p. 243.

<sup>13</sup> Clark, *Migration*, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, passim.

<sup>16</sup> M.J. Daunton, 'Towns and Economic Growth in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Towns in Societies*, pp. 245-277, (p. 245).

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 246.

Seven years later, another author stated succinctly that:

the manners, fashions, amusements, vices and follies of the metropolis now make their way to the remotest corners of the land ... along the turnpike road.<sup>18</sup>

If London was such a potent force – for good or ill – in influencing the culture of provincial centres, one would expect to see the patterns of London’s cultural life reflected in regional towns and cities. As far as commercial musical activity was concerned, London had been in the forefront of the development of the public concert; the first concerts – growing out of the activities of early musical societies made up of private gentlemen in such places as Oxford<sup>19</sup> and influenced by the long-established playing of fiddle music in taverns<sup>20</sup> – were put on in 1672 by John Banister, once leader of King Charles II’s band. Once established, concerts were rapidly taken up by Ben Wallington, Thomas Britton and others,<sup>21</sup> influenced to some degree by the attraction of being paid in advance (by admission charges) rather than relying on a later payment which (when owed by the king) rarely came.<sup>22</sup> Banister’s concerts took place daily, were *ad hoc* affairs dependent on the musicians who chose to turn up, and were sometimes chaotic in their organisation with performers improvising programmes as they went along and shuffling in and out of their places at great length;<sup>23</sup> Britton’s concerts seem to have improved on this, although their venue, in an upstairs room above

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<sup>18</sup> Eric Pawson, *Transport and Economy: The Turnpike Roads of Eighteenth Century Britain* (London: Academic Press, 1977), p. 310.

<sup>19</sup> J. Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts*, pp. 171-173.

<sup>20</sup> Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practise of Music* (1776), pp. 680-3, 699-702.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>22</sup> Robert King, *Henry Purcell* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), Chapter 1, *passim*.

<sup>23</sup> J. Wilson, (ed.), *Roger North on Music: Being a Selection from his Essays written during the Years, c1695-1728* (London: Novello, 1959), pp. 351-2.



a coal merchant's store, left a great deal to be desired.<sup>24</sup> By the 1730s, subscription series – winter series paid for in advance by the purchase of a ticket for a number of concerts – were being held in the metropolis in a variety of venues.<sup>25</sup>

Fashion came upon the scene early – Sir John Hawkins attributed the success of Britton's concerts to social pressures.<sup>26</sup> Governed in turn by fashionable fads (for Italian Opera, Italians in general, Handel's oratorios, ancient music and so on) and characterised by a multiplicity of different, often bitterly competitive, organisations (the Academy of Vocal Music, the Concert of Ancient Music, the Pantheon Concerts) London's musical life culminated in the 'rage for music' of the 1780s and 1790s and thereafter declined, under the social pressures engendered by fashion and by political factors – the king's illness, the anxieties of war and inflation. International soloists were lionised, English musicians often marginalised; competition, and a sometimes vicious determination to denigrate rivals, was rife.<sup>27</sup> With due allowance for differences in population, and for the delay necessary for any London trend to be transmitted to the provinces, the features of this musical activity should, if Porter's claim is to hold water, make their appearance in such centres as Newcastle, Durham and York.

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<sup>24</sup> Curtis Price, 'The Small-coal Cult', *MT*, December 1978, Vol. CXIX, pp. 1032-4.

<sup>25</sup> Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 2-8.

<sup>26</sup> Hawkins, *A General History*, pp. 700, 788.

<sup>27</sup> McVeigh, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

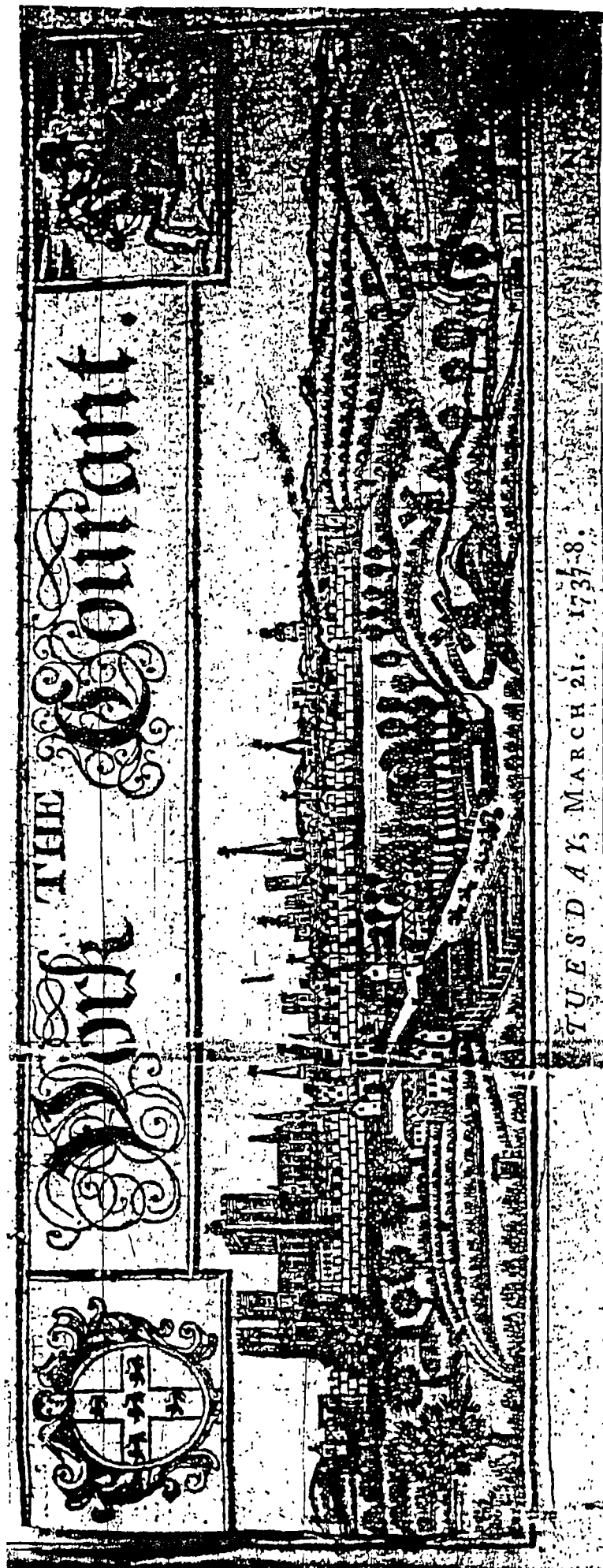


Plate 2: Masthead from the *York Courant* [YC 21 March 1737/8].

## II: Travelling north

York is indeed a pleasant and beautiful city and not at all the less beautiful for the Works and Lines about it being demolished and the City, as it may be said, being laid open for the beauty of Peace is seen in the Rubbish.<sup>28</sup>

Daniel Defoe, still haunted perhaps by the ghosts of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, came north to York in 1720 to find a city with a population of around 12,000 people. As such, it was the sixth largest city in the kingdom.<sup>29</sup> It was however in decline, having reached its high point in the mid-thirteenth century<sup>30</sup> and was rapidly being overtaken in importance locally by Leeds and Hull, as ‘the industrial and commercial centres of the woollen trade’.<sup>31</sup> Complaints of conservatism and inflexibility in its governing body were frequent;<sup>32</sup> in 1736, one writer commented that:

the paying a large sum of money for their freedoms, with the troublesome and chargeable offices they must often undertake, would deter any person of an enterprising genius in regard of manufacture, from coming to reside at York.<sup>33</sup>

During the eighteenth century, York’s population grew slowly, more slowly than in other urban centres; by 1750 it was only the sixteenth largest town in the country and its population had in fact fallen slightly to 11,500 people.<sup>34</sup> By 1800, it had recovered slightly – to 16,000 – but dropped back one place to seventeenth (Table 1.1).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Tour thro’ the Whole island of Great Britain* (1724-6) (London: Frank Cass, 1968), p. 636.

<sup>29</sup> Wrigley, *Urban growth and agricultural change*, p. 42.

<sup>30</sup> Daunton, *op.cit.*, p. 264.

<sup>31</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

**Table 1.1: Population in Newcastle, Durham and York in the eighteenth century<sup>36</sup>**

	Newcastle	Durham	York
1700	16,000	5,000	12,000
1750	29,000		11,400
1800	28,000/42,000	7,000	16,000

This decline may not have been obvious to Defoe; he saw only a rich variety of trade and produce.

No City in *England* is better furnished with Provisions of every Kind, nor any so cheap, ... the River being so navigable and so near the Sea, the Merchants here trade directly to what part of the world they will; ... they import their own Wines from *France* and *Portugal* and likewise their own Deals and Timber from *Norway*, and indeed what they please almost from where they please.<sup>37</sup>

The city continued to regard itself as a centre for the surrounding area and was regarded as such by local people. Defoe wrote:

There is abundance of good Company here, and abundance of good Families live here for the sake of the good Company and cheap living; a Man converses here with all the world as effectually as at *London*; the keeping up Assemblies among the younger Gentry was first set up here, a thing other Writers recommend mightily as the Character of a good Country.<sup>38</sup>

Defoe's opinion was quite other, believing Assemblies and suchlike entertainments to be 'a Plan laid for the Ruin of the Nation's Morals'.<sup>39</sup> Local residents, however, supported the 'other Writers' – in the early part of the century a number of embellishments were

<sup>36</sup> Data for Newcastle and York taken from Daunton and Wrigley, *Urban Growth*: Durham data my estimates from local sources. The Durham data and the disputed Newcastle information is discussed in more detail below.

<sup>37</sup> Defoe, op. cit., p. 639.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 638.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 638.

added to the already 'considerable' public buildings.

Halls for their Merchants and Traders, a large Town House, or Guildhall, and the Prison ... and a Building newly erected there [for] the Assizes; ... The Gentry and Persons of Distinction ... have Houses proportioned to their Quality.<sup>40</sup>

To these were added, in the early 1730s, new Assembly Rooms in Blake Street and the 'New Walk', a place where the genteel could take exercise, and see and be seen. This walk, according to an anonymous visitor:

runs parallel with the navigable river one mile, and is protected on the other side by a row of full-grown trees. Near the middle is a small plantation which the walk winds through. An arm of the river is passed over by means of a handsome bridge with one arch built of stone.<sup>41</sup>

Defoe also notes the racecourse at Hambleton Down and the annual races held there, particularly admiring the ladies who attended the event.<sup>42</sup>

From York, Defoe moved east to Beverley and Hull, remarking that 'the middle of this Riding or Division of Yorkshire is very thin of Towns and consequently of People'.<sup>43</sup> He found much to admire in both towns and remarked on the good reputation of Hull merchants.<sup>44</sup> His route north to Durham lay roundabout, via Scarborough, Whitby and Darlington ('a Post Town; [it] has nothing remarkable but Dirt, and a high Stone Bridge over little or no Water').<sup>45</sup> Another visitor travelling north twenty years later, Spencer Cowper (second son of Earl Cowper, Lord High Chancellor of England, and lately appointed Dean of Durham Cathedral), took a more direct route and commented on his journey in terms that echo Alan Everitt's comments about county and country:

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<sup>40</sup> Defoe, op. cit., pp. 639, 642.

<sup>41</sup> Anon, 'A Northern Tour from St. Albans 1768', quoted in Peter Borsay, 'The English Urban Renaissance. The Development of Provincial Urban Culture, c.1680-c.1760', in *Eighteenth-Century Town*, pp. 159-187, (p. 162).

<sup>42</sup> Defoe, op. cit., pp. 642-3.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 643.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 652.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 657.

Yorkshire I think a beautiful country to travel through, but the villages and towns look so miserably rough and ragged, and the roads are so very stony and disagreeable, that it is not a country I could choose to live in. The County of Durham greatly exceeded what I expected of it, for instead of a wild, heathy country I found it very well cultivated, and watered with several fine rivers. The country about the town vastly romantic and beautiful, the hills being mostly covered with fine woods.<sup>46</sup>

The city of Durham, to which Defoe and Cowper came in turn, aroused different feelings in each. Defoe described it as ‘a little compact neatly contriv’d City, surrounded almost with the River Wear’.<sup>47</sup> In pursuit of his vow not to linger too long on historical matters, he passed over the Cathedral quickly but pointed out that the establishment there was ‘the richest in England’.<sup>48</sup> His praise was generally tepid and in contradistinction to Celia Fiennes who had visited the city in 1698; she described it as possessing ‘the noblest, cleane and pleasant buildings, streets large well pitch’d ... the walks are very pleasant by the river side’.<sup>49</sup> At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Durham was a small city, with a population probably no more than 5,000 strong; in the course of the century it grew only a further 2,000, to 7,000 (see Table 1.1).<sup>50</sup> It was based, geographically and socially, around the cathedral establishment, whose wealth drew its prebendaries, pluralists all, from all corners of the kingdom. Celia Fiennes estimated the Bishop’s ‘spirituall’ revenue at £5-6,000 in addition to which he had his own private income from temporal sources.<sup>51</sup> The city was also notable for its dissenting population, both Quakers<sup>52</sup> and Roman Catholics, who, according to Defoe, ‘live peaceably and disturb no Body’.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Edward Hughes (ed.), *Letters of Spencer Cowper, Dean of Durham, 1746-1774* (London/Durham: Andrews/Quaritch, Surtees Society, 1965), p. 61, 18 September 1745.

<sup>47</sup> Defoe, op. cit., p. 657.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 657.

<sup>49</sup> Christopher Morris (ed.), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1689) (London: Cresset Press, 1947), p. 215.

<sup>50</sup> Durham estimates based on information in Browne Willis, *The County of Durham [and] City of Durham [from Notitia Parliamentaria: or, an History of the Counties, Cities and Boroughs in England and Wales]* (London: c1720), pp. 509-535.

<sup>51</sup> Fiennes, op. cit., p. 214.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 214-5.

<sup>53</sup> Defoe, op. cit., p. 658.

Defoe does not comment on entertainments in Durham and the city certainly did not possess stylish Assembly Rooms like those in York. Fiennes, however, discovered a pleasant social life, for the ladies and gentlemen of the town at least:

In the evening I walk'd out ... to another part of the town by another turn of the river along by its banck, ...in walking by this river we came to [Kepier Hospital] which is now old and ruinous but has been good; the gardens are flourishing still with good walks and much fruite of which I tasted, its a place that is used like our Spring Gardens for the Company of the town to walk in the evening and its most pleasant by the river, which by means of severall bays or wires which is of rock the water has greate falls from thence which adds a murmuring sound acceptable to the people passing ...<sup>54</sup>

The somewhat idyllic picture conveyed by Fiennes however was an illusion, or had changed by the time Cowper reached the city in 1746. His view of it was very different – his description of Durham, in a letter to his brother, was short and dismissive:

the town itself nasty and disagreeable, the streets narrow and wretchedly paved, and the houses dirty and black, as if they had no inhabitants but colliers.

The streets were narrow, the paving bad, the inhabitants fools and the rooms of the Deanery 'good rooms, but awkwardly disposed, others so dark and dismal you cannot see your hand in them'. Even the great Cathedral 'has so little beauty in it that it is no improvement to the prospect'.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps Cowper's antagonism derived from the discovery of 'popish' tendencies in the Cathedral establishment; he particularly disliked the vestments which he described as 'full and tawdry ... meer [sic] frippery and scandalous'.<sup>56</sup> He commented five days after his arrival that 'I have had but bad spirits since I came here'.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Fiennes, op. cit., pp. 215-6.

<sup>55</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 62, 18 September 1746.

<sup>56</sup> Idem.

<sup>57</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 64, 23 September 1746.

Defoe entered and left Durham in considerably better spirits than Spencer Cowper, passed through Chester-le-Street ('an old, dirty, thoroughfare town')<sup>58</sup> and came to Newcastle. The city had long been the chief source of London's fuel and Defoe saw the evidence of the industry all the way:

... the road to Newcastle gives a View of the inexhaustible Store of Coals and Coal Pits, from whence not London only, but all the South Part of England is continually supplied; ... We see the prodigious Heaps, I may say Mountains, of Coals, which are dug up at every Pit, and how many of those Pits there are.<sup>59</sup>

London must have been in Defoe's mind continuously, although his inclination to compare Newcastle itself with London is a little surprising – he went so far as to compare the bridge across the Tyne to London Bridge.<sup>60</sup> Celia Fiennes had been even more enthusiastic:

Its a noble town, tho' in a bottom, it most resembles London of any place in England, its buildings lofty and large of brick mostly, or stone, the streets are very broad and handsome and very well pitch'd and many of them with very fine Conduits of water in each, allways running into a large stone Cistern for every bodyes use...<sup>61</sup>

Defoe described the city as 'spacious, extended, infinitely populous' – it is estimated that Newcastle had around 16,000 inhabitants in 1700 and was growing rapidly (see Table 1.1).<sup>62</sup> The Tyne was 'noble, large and deep'.<sup>63</sup> Remnants of walls and of city gates remained, unlike at York,<sup>64</sup> and both Defoe and Fiennes were greatly impressed by the quay. Public buildings were also attractive: a hospital for the Keelmen, the Mayor's House, the Assize Hall and the Exchange.<sup>65</sup> Fiennes also referred to the Castle and St. Nicholas's church, the principal church in the city. In addition to the coal industry,

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<sup>58</sup> Defoe, op. cit., p. 658.

<sup>59</sup> Defoe, op. cit., p. 659.

<sup>60</sup> Idem.

<sup>61</sup> Fiennes, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>62</sup> Wrigley, *Urban growth*, p. 42.

<sup>63</sup> Defoe, op. cit., p. 659.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 659; Fiennes, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>65</sup> Defoe, op. cit., pp. 259-60; Fiennes, op. cit., p. 210.



shipbuilding, naval suppliers and the iron industry all thrived; Fiennes stressed the quality of the 'service sector' in the form of shops and markets:

Their shops are good and are of distinct trades, not selling many things in one shop as is the custom in most country towns and cittys; here is one market for Corne, another for Hay besides all other things which takes up two or three streetes.<sup>66</sup>

Neither Fiennes nor Defoe gave any indication of the extent to which the city attracted the population of its hinterland, although it is difficult to imagine that the corn and hay referred to by Fiennes and the 'very indifferent sort of cheese, little things, looks black on the outside and soft sower things' were not brought into the city for sale from the agricultural areas outside the walls.<sup>67</sup> Newcastle certainly attracted migrants from further afield; a survey of 1740 reported that nearly 70% of keelmen were born outside the city, 55% coming from Scotland.<sup>68</sup>

Fiennes, more inclined to leisure than Defoe, made a point of seeking out diversions. Her visit to the Barber Surgeons' Hall to see two dissected bodies reduced to muscles, sinews and 'ligeaments'<sup>69</sup> is described in considerable detail (unlike Defoe's brief mention),<sup>70</sup> but she was equally pleased by:

a very pleasant bowling-green a little walke out of the town with a large gravel walke round it with two rows of trees on each side making it very shady; there is a fine entertaineing house that makes up the fourth side before which is a pretty garden by the side shady walk, its a sort of Spring Garden where the Gentlemen and Ladyes walke in the evening; there is a green house in the garden; its a pleasant walke to the town by the walls; there is one broad walke by the side of the town ruins a good length made with coal ashes and so well trodden and the ruines makes it firm; there is a walke all around the walls of the town.<sup>71</sup>

If all this seems unduly favourable, one disagreeable aspect of the city struck both writers forcibly. Fiennes approached the city along the Tyne Valley from Hexham,

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<sup>66</sup> Fiennes, op. cit., pp. 210-1.

<sup>67</sup> Fiennes, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>68</sup> Ellis, op. cit. p. 209.

<sup>69</sup> Fiennes, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>70</sup> Defoe, op. cit., p. 260.

with an escort of ‘abundance of little carriages ... which is to convey the Coales from the pitts to the barges on the river’;<sup>72</sup> she wrote:

this country all about is full of this Coale the sulphur of it taints  
the aire and it smells strongly to strangers.<sup>73</sup>

Defoe also remarked on the smell and it is likely he saw more of the less salubrious parts of the city than Fiennes; he described the heart of the city around the quayside:

The situation of the Town to the Landward is exceedingly unpleasant and the Buildings very close and old, standing on the Declivity of two exceeding high Hills which, together with the Smoke of the Coals, makes it not the pleasantest Place in the World to live in.<sup>74</sup>

Not only Newcastle was affected; the smoke from the salt works at North Shields could be seen south of Durham, sixteen miles away; Defoe remarked that ‘we saw it ascend in Clouds over the Hills’.<sup>75</sup>

Cowper was even less reticent about the effects of the pollution, when he visited the city in 1748, although it is hard to believe that he was not influenced by what seems to have been a prejudice against urban living.

My call there was to attend the meeting of the Sons of the Clergy ... This was my first excursion to Newcastle and unless I have the same call, or some business, don’t care whether it is my last; for so filthy, so dirty a disagreeable place I never saw. It has indeed the riches and trade of London in some degree but with it the nastiness and filth of Edinburgh [and] the inhabitants of the poorer sort seem to vie with one another in dirt.<sup>76</sup>

In view of its industry and the unpleasant side-effects of that industry, Newcastle was unlikely to become a place of leisure resort, as did Bath, Harrogate and other spas.<sup>77</sup> It was not short of wealthy men in search of pleasure, however; Fiennes remarked on the ‘merchants walking to-an-again’ in the Exchange and the great extent of the trade

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<sup>71</sup> Fiennes, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>72</sup> Fiennes, p. 209.

<sup>73</sup> Idem.

<sup>74</sup> Defoe, op. cit., p. 660.

<sup>75</sup> Idem.

<sup>76</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 102, 1 September 1748.

enacted on the Quay;<sup>78</sup> Defoe commented on the trade not only with London but also with Holland, Hamburg, Norway and the Baltic.<sup>79</sup> Joyce Ellis, in a social study of Newcastle between 1660 and 1760, calls it 'one of the most advanced economic regions in the country'.<sup>80</sup> She estimates that in the 1720s the coal trade earned £250,000 a year for the city 'and thus financed not only a vast return trade in foodstuffs and commercial goods but also the circulation of capital and credit that supported local industry'.<sup>81</sup> Unlike York, whose population stagnated during the century, Newcastle grew from approximately 16,000 in 1700 to 29,000 at mid-century and around 42,000 in 1801,<sup>82</sup> although rapid growth elsewhere meant that it dropped from fourth largest in 1700 to fourteenth in 1801.<sup>83</sup> The wealth generated – albeit concentrated amongst the more pleasant parishes of St. Andrew's and St. John's rather than amongst the keelmen and immigrant workers on the Sandhill and the Side down by the river<sup>84</sup> – created a demand for more than the mere necessities of life. As Ellis puts it:

The presence in the town of a number of luxury crafts, retail outlets and professional services seems to indicate that Newcastle was large and wealthy enough in its own right to generate a market for leisure and luxury.<sup>85</sup>

The establishment of the walks, of dancing assemblies and of race meetings in the early years of the eighteenth century were the first signs of the development of this leisure

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<sup>77</sup> Industrial centres were not necessarily cultural deserts, however; see J. Burchell's account of concert life in Manchester in *Polite or Commercial concerts*, pp. 243-272.

<sup>78</sup> Fiennes, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>79</sup> Defoe, op. cit., pp. 60-1.

<sup>80</sup> Ellis, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>82</sup> Figures taken from Wrigley, *Urban growth and agricultural change*, p. 42; Dauntton in *Towns and Economic Growth* (p. 247) suggests a lesser figure of 28,000. Local newspapers of the period support the latter figure quoted, citing a total of 28,294 with an extra 8,597 people living in Gateshead, making a total of 36,891 [*NCh* 4 April, 25 April 1801].

<sup>83</sup> Dauntton, op. cit., p. 247.

<sup>84</sup> Ellis, op. cit., pp. 196, 199.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

market, a market professional musicians were to be a part of and which they sought to exploit.

There were thus very real differences of character in the three centres examined in this study. York was a genteel county town in steady decline, being overtaken by newer industrial and port centres such as Leeds and Hull. Durham, much smaller in size, centred around the Cathedral personnel – wealthy, cultured and well-educated, noble or related to noble families, but only infrequently in residence; many prebendaries chose to spend much of their time in what they considered to be more salubrious southern climes (Spencer Cowper, for instance, much preferred his family home in Hertfordshire).<sup>86</sup> Newcastle, with its heavy reliance on industry, created a wealthy elite amongst the merchant classes and minor local gentry. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, conditions existed in all these diverse environments which encouraged the establishment of leisure activities including commercial musical activities – teaching, concert-promotion, theatrical performance, composition and other associated activities; this in turn encouraged the growth of a professional musical community which, although never particularly large, was at times vigorously active.

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<sup>86</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, passim.

# 2

## THE MUSIC PROFESSION IN THE NORTH-EAST: 1700

### I: Durham

The musical communities existing in Newcastle, Durham and York in 1700 reflected the differing characters of the cities. Music-making in Durham was largely dependent on the Cathedral. It was the only church in the city that possessed an organ and organist; although St. Nicholas, the church in the Market Place, had once owned an organ, this had been removed in 1684.<sup>1</sup> Waits were certainly employed by the town Corporation to accompany civic processions and other ceremonial events but information about them is scarce, owing to the nineteenth-century destruction of many of the records of their employers. A few scattered references to waits remain in the Grassmen's accounts of

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<sup>1</sup> R. Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, Vol. IV (1840) (Wakefield: EP Publications, 1972), p.48.

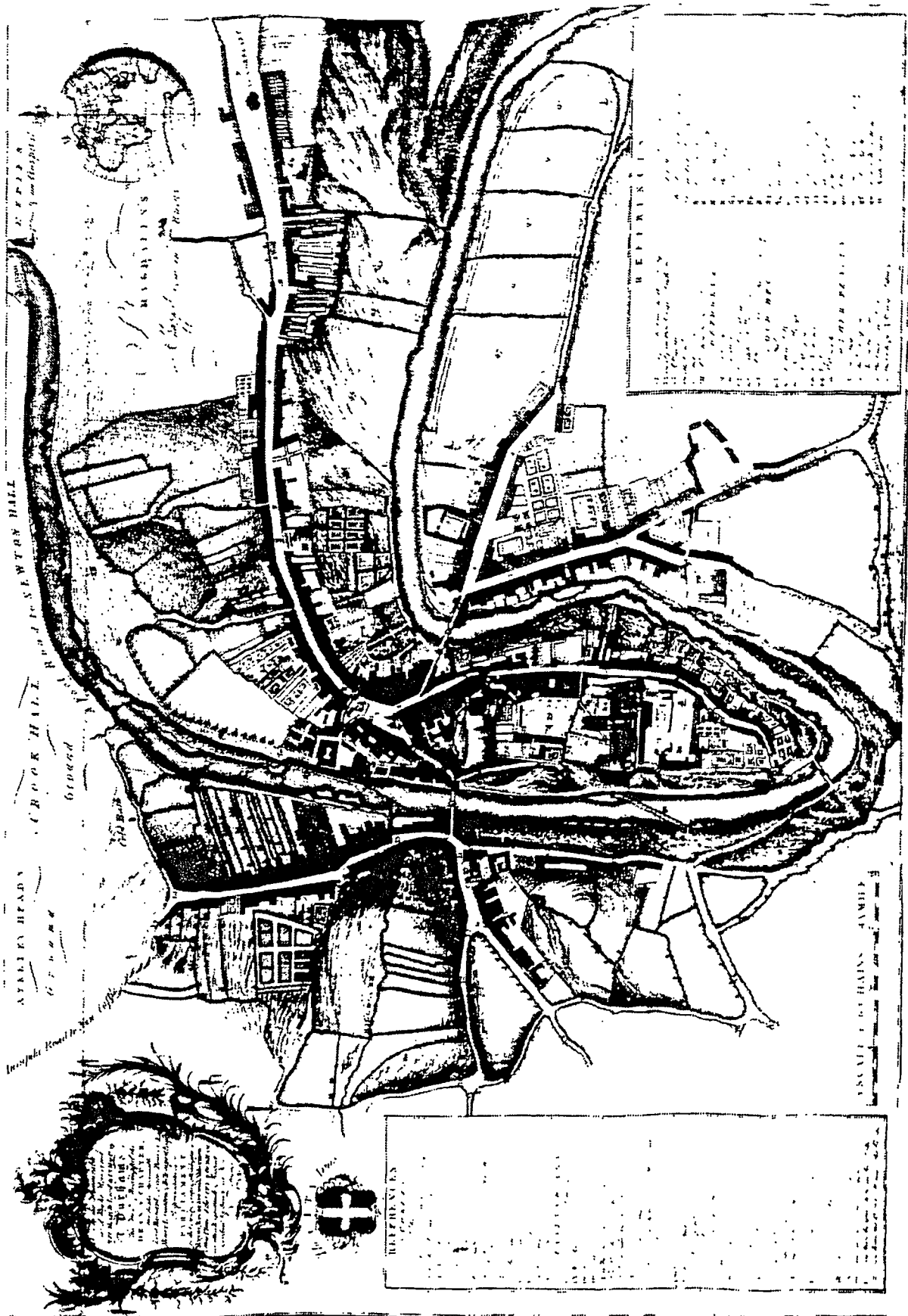


Plate 3: Map of Durham by T. Forster (1754).

the parish of St Giles which record payments to drummers, fiddlers and waits for beating the parish bounds.<sup>2</sup> Even these men may have been connected with the Cathedral, if only in an informal sense; the two waits whose names survive from this period – Abraham Taylor and Peter Blenkinsop – were both members of the Cathedral Choir.<sup>3</sup> It was not a connection of which the Dean and Chapter approved – Taylor and Blenkinsop were persuaded to give up their waits' places by the addition of £5 per annum to their salaries as singing men.<sup>4</sup> The sum may represent the waits' annual salary.

The Cathedral's musical establishment at the beginning of the eighteenth century consisted of an organist who was also master of the choristers,<sup>5</sup> and a choir that usually comprised ten choristers and eight singing men known as 'the Gentlemen of the Choir'.<sup>6</sup> The adult numbers may have been swollen by supernumeraries and probationer singing men; minor canons were also expected to sing in the choir.<sup>7</sup> The appointment of the incumbent organist, William Greggs, in 1682,<sup>8</sup> had been a break with long-established tradition for he was the first organist to have been recruited from outside the choir since 1576<sup>9</sup> – he came to the cathedral from York Minster where he had been a singing man and Master of the Choristers.<sup>10</sup> The reason for this change in tradition is not known; the Dean and Chapter may have been influenced by a new wider perspective, or an increase in ambition or wealth (or both) may have encouraged them to search for a musician with wider experience than was available locally. They followed their own precedent in their

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<sup>2</sup> *Memorials of St. Giles, Durham*, Surtees Society, Vol. 95 (Durham/London: Andrewa/Quaritch, 1895). Grassmen's Accounts, 1727 passim.

<sup>3</sup> CA Act Books of Durham Cathedral (DAB), 20 November 1733; Treasurer's Accounts (TA), 1733-4.

<sup>4</sup> Idem.

<sup>5</sup> This had not always been the case; the posts had frequently been held by different men in the seventeenth century. See Brian Crosby, *Durham Cathedral Choristers and their Masters* (Durham: Dean and Chapter, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> CA TA 1799-1700.

<sup>7</sup> CA DAB 20 November 1690. The minor canons may in fact have been an integral part of the choir as at York. See below.

<sup>8</sup> Crosby, *Durham Cathedral Choristers*, p. 25. Brian Crosby, 'Greggs, William', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 7, p. 326.

<sup>9</sup> Crosby, *Durham Cathedral Choristers*, p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> York Minster Library (YML) E2/6, Chamberlain's Accounts (CYM), passim.

next appointment on Gregg's death in 1711.<sup>11</sup> His successor, James Hesletine, was around nineteen years old; he had been a chorister in the Chapel Royal under John Blow and may also have held an organist's post in the capital.<sup>12</sup> Cathedral records refer to him as 'of London'.<sup>13</sup> He was plainly considered to be of a higher calibre than Greggs; the latter's final salary of £40 was increased to £70 per annum for Hesletine.<sup>14</sup> The organist also received extra payments for such duties as teaching the choristers, tuning and cleaning the organ and making minor repairs to the pipes.<sup>15</sup>

The choristers were local boys and in some families – the Smiths, the Marshalls, the Paxtons – several sons entered the choir one after another.<sup>16</sup> They were paid £3 6s. 8d. each per annum, half the basic rate for singing men; when the boys' voices broke, each was given forty shillings to help pay for an apprenticeship to a local craftsman.<sup>17</sup> A few returned later to become singing men; in 1726, for instance, Cuthbert Brass took up a position as singing man with a salary of £20 per annum,<sup>18</sup> fifteen months after leaving the ranks of the boys with his apprenticeship fee.<sup>19</sup> He almost certainly continued to serve his apprenticeship and to earn some part of his living outside the Cathedral Choir – these singing men were not full-time professional musicians. Peter Blenkinsop, who accepted £5 compensation for giving up his wait's post in 1733, was not expected to give up his profession of innkeeper<sup>20</sup> and later singing men included a watchmaker,<sup>21</sup> an upholsterer,<sup>22</sup> and a barber.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> CA DAB 20 January 1710/11.

<sup>12</sup> Watkins Shaw, 'Hesletine, James', *Grove*, 8, p. 531.

<sup>13</sup> CA DAB 20 January 1710/11.

<sup>14</sup> The organist of St. Nicholas in Newcastle received only £25 per annum at the same period and the salary of the York Minster organist was £40.

<sup>15</sup> CA TA passim.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>18</sup> CA DAB 1 July 1727.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 March 1725/6.

<sup>20</sup> NC 23 October 1756.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 July 1782.

<sup>22</sup> NA 11 July 1795.

<sup>23</sup> CA TA 1755-6.



The Dean and Chapter's ambitions, evident in their appointment of organists from outside the local area, were extended to the Gentlemen of the Choir. Although, in the first half of the century at least, local men continued to make up the bulk of the adult voices,<sup>24</sup> the Chapter were intent upon improving the quality of the choir by bringing in well-established singers from elsewhere. In the first decade of the century, the Cathedral made payments to a Mr Budney of Cambridge 'for his Care in supplying the Quire with good voyces'.<sup>25</sup> Budney evidently trawled southern cathedrals for suitable singers; amongst those he may have recruited were a Mr. Gryffin from Lincoln who came to Durham in 1694,<sup>26</sup> Thomas Laye (1710)<sup>27</sup> and John Ash (1722).<sup>28</sup> The origins of the latter two men are unknown. These imported singers were paid considerably more than the local men – Ash, for instance, received £50 per annum compared to Cuthbert Brass's £30<sup>29</sup> – and the Cathedral authorities were prepared to allow exceptional singers to set their own terms. In 1693 the Dean was authorised to write to 'Mr. Blundeville the Singing Man at York to know upon what terms he will come to serve this church'.<sup>30</sup> Blundeville took ten years to make up his mind and by the time he reached Durham he may have been past his best; his terms were remarkably reasonable at £25 per annum.<sup>31</sup>

The Chapter Act Books indicate that not only was the Chapter concerned to recruit high-quality singers but also that it was prepared to pay for measures to improve the skills of existing choir members. In practice, this consisted of allowing singing men

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix 6.

<sup>25</sup> CA DAB 20 July 1704.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 20 July 1694.

<sup>27</sup> CA TA 1710/11.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1722-3.

<sup>29</sup> Idem.

<sup>30</sup> CA DAB 15 May 1693.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 6 January 1702/3.

paid leave of absence for 'improvement'.<sup>32</sup> A typical case was that of Robert Softly who in 1701 was given:

leave to go to London for a Yeare to improve his Skill in Singing and his Handwriting and Art in Pricking Songbooks, And his Salarie shall be paid as it becomes due.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly Abraham Taylor (the former wait) was given six months leave of absence in 1711.<sup>34</sup>

For some singing men, leave of absence for 'improvement' could extend over a period of years. William Smith, admitted singing man in 1722 on the lowest possible annual salary, £6 13s. 4d,<sup>35</sup> was given leave eight months later to go to London for an indefinite period.<sup>36</sup> Two years later he was given another twelve months leave; it is not clear whether this was a continuance of the former leave or whether he had returned to the Cathedral in the meantime.<sup>37</sup> He had certainly returned before October 1727, as in that month he was given leave 'to go to Newcastle for a Month to learn to play on the Organ'.<sup>38</sup> His salary had by this time risen to £20 per annum,<sup>39</sup> and he continued as a singing man until his death in 1734.<sup>40</sup>

The Dean and Chapter's willingness to fund these absences for instruction is the more striking in view of their unfortunate experiences with Richard Elford, who had been sworn in as a probationer singing man in July 1695,<sup>41</sup> and as a full singing man three years later.<sup>42</sup> Elford took advantage of his leave of absence in London to augment

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<sup>32</sup> The Act Books record requests for leave of absence; any training done within the Cathedral or the city would not therefore be recorded if it did not require the absence from duty of the singing man involved. This means that some singing men may have received training with local musicians that cannot now be traced.

<sup>33</sup> CA DAB 22 October 1701.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 24 September 1711.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 24 September 1722.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 10 July 1723.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 30 June 1725.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 14 October 1727. This visit was probably to Thomas Powell at St. Nicholas's Church. See below.

<sup>39</sup> CA TA 1726-7.

<sup>40</sup> Burial Registers of St. Oswald's Church, Durham, 15 March 1733/4.

<sup>41</sup> CA DAB 20 July 1695.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 20 November 1698.

his income by singing in the theatre; worse, he showed no remorse and in February 1698/9 was ‘admonisht for neglecting y<sup>e</sup> Quire, and Singing in y<sup>e</sup> Playhouse and ... for his Manyfest Contumacy was expell’d y<sup>e</sup> Choir’.<sup>43</sup> Elford’s example was apparently not followed by other members of the choir and the practice of sending singing men to London continued throughout the early decades of the century. These policies – of attracting singers of a high standard and of giving them opportunities to increase their skills – ensured that the choir was not an isolated, inwardly-turned body, but had wide and frequent links with other ecclesiastical musical establishments and, to a lesser extent, as Elford’s story indicates, with secular music-making. But to a certain degree, the choir resembled the prebendial body itself in attracting by its wealth outside notables who, if the Act Books are to be believed, often distinguished themselves by their absences, both authorised and illicit; frequent admonitions against poor attendance at services may indicate that the choir as a whole did not always reflect the quality of its individual parts.

## II: Newcastle

The musical profession in Newcastle in the early part of the century is more extensively documented than that of Durham. References survive in parish registers to even the most obscure of musicians – the ballad singers and street fiddlers<sup>44</sup> – although little information remains about such men except for a few dates and children’s names.

The City Corporation employed five waits who were paid £5 each per annum,

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<sup>43</sup> CA DAB 18 February 1698/9. For Elford’s activities in London and his later career, see Charles Burney, *A General History*, pp. 481, 482fn and 488.

<sup>44</sup> e.g. Baptismal registers of All Saints’ Church, Newcastle, 26 September 1696, 22 November 1697, 1 March 1707/8.

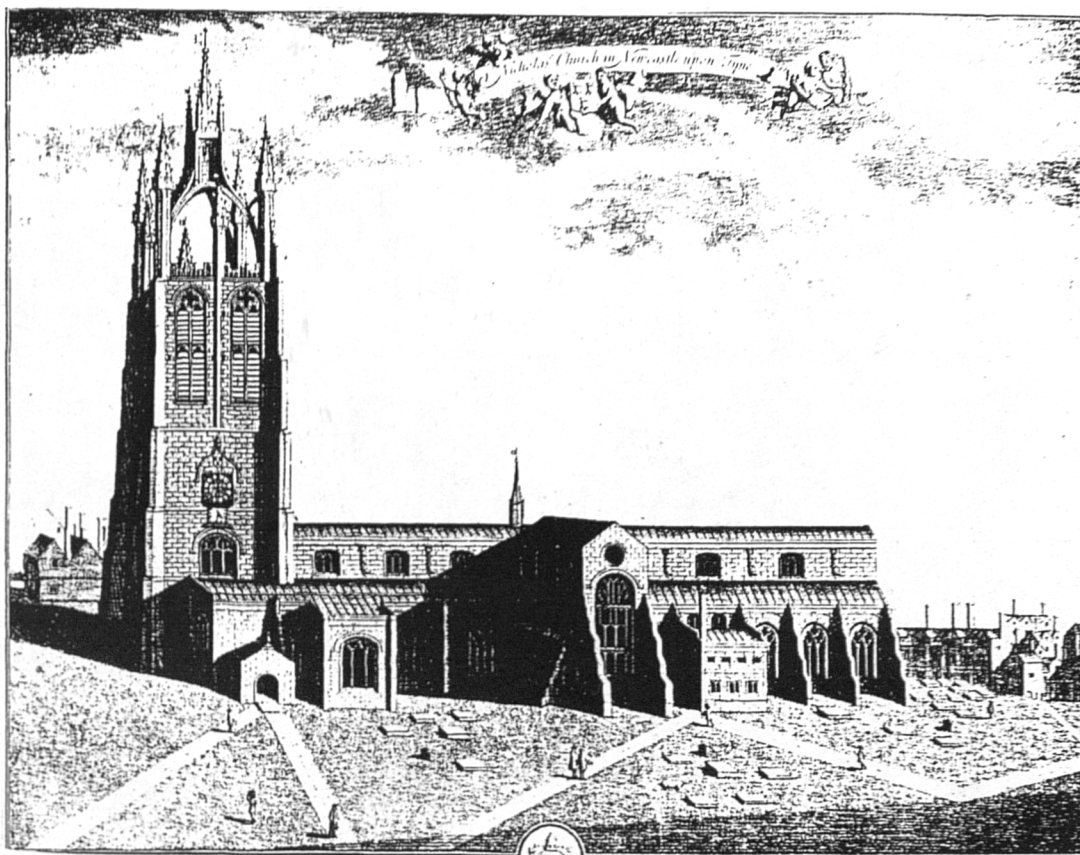


Plate 4: View of St. Nicholas's Church, Newcastle by W. Horsey (1715).

with a new cloak every year; in practice, the latter entitlement was commuted to a money payment (£1 each) two years out of every three.<sup>45</sup> The waits' status was not high and their reputation poor for both musical and personal reasons. A number of problems in 1705 suggest that some waits were too ill to work and that performance quality was low; the Corporation appointed a new wait, John Jubb, 'to make them a better company and a good concert of music'.<sup>46</sup> Jubb was probably ineffectual, however, and at his death in 1711<sup>47</sup> the Corporation was still complaining of 'divers irregular practices committed and done by Robert Martin and others to the great prejudice of the company of waites of this town'.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, Martin and the other offending waits were not removed – Martin was still in post in 1737.<sup>49</sup> The job was sometimes passed down through the different members of a family; Martin's two sons, William and John, were also waits.<sup>50</sup> Many of these musicians were probably tradesmen or craftsmen attempting to supplement their income with a regular salary – this was certainly the case in other North-Eastern towns such as Hexham and Berwick where parish registers reveal a variety of occupations amongst the waits, including cordwainer<sup>51</sup> and innkeeper.<sup>52</sup> As such their abilities and their commitment to the post may sometimes have been low. However, frequent use of *wait* or *musician* as a job description in parish registers by these men, in preference to other possible terms, suggests a certain pride in the profession.

Little is known about Newcastle organists at this period. Only two of the city's four churches – St. Nicholas and All Saints – had organs. St. Nicholas was the better

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<sup>45</sup> TAWS 543, Chamberlain's Accounts, Newcastle Corporation (CAN), *passim*.

<sup>46</sup> TAWS Common Council Minutes of Newcastle Corporation (Co. Co.) 8 October 1705.

<sup>47</sup> Burial Registers of St. John's Church, Newcastle, 30 Newcastle 1711.

<sup>48</sup> TAWS Co. Co. 17 April 1711.

<sup>49</sup> Burial registers of St. Nicholas's Church, Newcastle, 24 April 1737.

<sup>50</sup> Burial registers of St. Nicholas's Church, Newcastle, 8 May 1717; Baptismal registers of St. Nicholas's Church, Newcastle, 3 January 1732/3.

<sup>51</sup> Baptismal Registers of Hexham parish church, 9 December 1730.

<sup>52</sup> CA Receiver General's Accounts, will of Henry Tate, innkeeper and wait, 1 December 1778.

paid appointment and remained so throughout the century; in 1700 the organist was paid £25 per annum with the addition of a £5 gratuity every year.<sup>53</sup> The salary was increased in the 1720s to £40 per annum (although the gratuity was removed).<sup>54</sup> The organist was also paid £2 per year for tuning the organ.<sup>55</sup> The first two eighteenth-century holders of the post – Samuel Nichols and Thomas Powell – are shadowy figures. Nichols was probably a local man;<sup>56</sup> nothing more is known of him apart from the record of payments of salary in the Chamberlain's Accounts.<sup>57</sup> Much the same is true of Powell, although it is clear that either his income was not equal to his expenditure or he was a poor financial manager. At his death in 1736, he was described as being 'in poor circumstances' and the Corporation set aside £20 to pay his debts and funeral expenses.<sup>58</sup>

The first known eighteenth-century organist of All Saints, in the heart of the city overlooking the Quayside, was William Greggs, the twenty-two-year-old son of the Durham Cathedral organist. Greggs was appointed in July 1713 but died less than six months later.<sup>59</sup> His successor was surprisingly prominent, although it is not clear whether the Corporation knew their appointee's full history. He is referred to in Corporation Minutes as 'Mr Francis de Prendecourt', 'Francis Prendcourt' and 'Captain Prendcourt'<sup>60</sup> and can almost certainly be identified with the musician of that name known to have been active at the Catholic court of James II.<sup>61</sup> Prendcourt had fled from London at the time of James's overthrow in 1688 and is otherwise last heard of in Derby in 1705.<sup>62</sup> Newcastle may have been a refuge for Prendcourt; his appointment to the All

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<sup>53</sup> TAWS 543/74, CAN, *passim*.

<sup>54</sup> TAWS 543/90, CAN, *passim*.

<sup>55</sup> TAWS 543/91, CAN, September 1729. The wages of all Newcastle's organists (except St. John's) were paid by the City Corporation until 1794; after this date they paid only the organist of St. Nicholas.

<sup>56</sup> In 1710 his brother was reprimanded for allowing unauthorised persons to rent the pews in the organ loft [Co. Co. 18 December 1710].

<sup>57</sup> e.g. TAWS 543/82, CAN, May 1709.

<sup>58</sup> Co. Co. 20 October 1736.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 July 1713, 17 January 1714.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 January 1714, 19 December 1716, 25 July 1720.

<sup>61</sup> M. Tilmouth, 'Prendcourt', *Grove*, 15, pp. 214-5.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

Saints post lends an added irony to Roger North's remarks about his religious scruples:

This gentleman, after he was turned out ... owned himself a Protestant and went to church, but there is no instance of his receiving the Sacrament. He hath sometimes, to show his skill and get fame, played verses and voluntaries upon the organ in the great churches, but never would either compose or attend any anthem or service in our church.<sup>63</sup>

Prendcourt's salary at All Saints was a mere £12 per annum, augmented by payments for teaching one of the Charity School boys to play the organ and act as his deputy.<sup>64</sup> He may also have had other pupils. Like Powell at St. Nicholas, he was plainly in financial difficulties and Corporation Minutes record payments to him 'in charity' (listed amongst 'payments to the poor') on four occasions.<sup>65</sup>

Prendcourt died in September 1725; his successor was the only man at this period to combine the jobs of organist and wait.<sup>66</sup> Solomon Strolger was probably a local man and may have been highly regarded by the Corporation; on his taking up the post, the salary was immediately doubled to £25.<sup>67</sup> Taking into account his wait's salary and money in lieu of the wait's cloak, Strolgers's total salary from the Corporation per annum was not much less than that of Powell at St. Nicholas.<sup>68</sup> Unlike Powell, however, Strolger seems to have been financially extremely capable and amassed a considerable amount of money, despite having to support a family of nine children.<sup>69</sup>

It is probable that all these organists taught on a frequent basis, although no advertisements survive in papers and pupils were no doubt obtained largely by word of mouth. The few advertisements for musical instruction that were published all involved visitors to the city; these frequently combined concert-giving with teaching activities. Thus the 'famous Lute-Master' who gave several concerts in May 1725 also advertised

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<sup>63</sup> John Wilson (ed.), *Roger North*, p. 34.

<sup>64</sup> Co. Co. 17 January 1714, 19 December 1716.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 December 1717, 25 July 1720, 2 October 1721, 17 December 1722.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 September 1725.

<sup>67</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>68</sup> Co. Co. 30 September 1725.

<sup>69</sup> See below, Chapter 9.

that: 'Any Gentlemen or Ladies, if they have a Desire to learn to sing, or to play on the Lute or Flute, he is to be heard of at the Assembly House'.<sup>70</sup>

The lute master stayed only two or three weeks, but occasionally a wandering teacher would make a longer stay of several months or even years. In 1726, a peripatetic psalm-teacher made an anonymous appearance in local papers, describing himself as 'a Musick-Master' who had taught:

Vocal and Instrumental, as well as Church Musick, in many of the Chief Cities, Counties, Markets, and other great Towns; but last at Whickham and it's neighbouring Villages ...<sup>71</sup>

He claimed to have already arranged to teach psalm-singing to the Grammar School scholars and now offered to teach any music-lover a variety of styles of music including 'Cantatas, or any other Opera Songs, with all their Graces'.<sup>72</sup> He also suggested that the Governors of the Charity School might like to employ him, a blatant hint which appears to have been quickly taken up. The following year, at a charity sermon given at St. John's Church for the benefit of the Charity School in that parish, the charity boys sang 'an anthem ... in two Parts, composed by Mr. Guilding'.<sup>73</sup> Guilding was also teaching the charity children of Sunderland by this time.<sup>74</sup>

If the identification of the wandering music-master of the first advertisement with the Guilding of the second advertisement is correct, his next move was unexpected; in July 1729, he was sworn in as a singing man at Durham Cathedral with a higher than average salary of £30 per annum.<sup>75</sup> His stay was short-lived however; in February 1731 he drew his quarter's salary early and left the Cathedral.<sup>76</sup> His later movements are not known.

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<sup>70</sup> NC 22 May 1725.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 28 May 1726. Such teachers could cover a wide area in their travels, although they tended to remain within a region; this man's area of operation is nowhere stated explicitly.

<sup>72</sup> Idem.

<sup>73</sup> NC 17 June 1727.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 1 December 1727.

<sup>75</sup> CA DAB 29 July 1729.

<sup>76</sup> CA TA 1730-1.



For all these professional musicians, and for amateur music-lovers, Newcastle offered a variety of backup services. Manuscript paper and books were available from stationers such as James Fleming on the Tyne Bridge,<sup>77</sup> as were musical publications such as Cluer's Musical Cards ('being a compleat Song on every Card').<sup>78</sup> Newspaper publishers often supplied music advertised in their columns.<sup>79</sup> Stationers also frequently sold fiddle strings and may have stocked other musical accessories.<sup>80</sup>

The city had a number of musical-instrument makers and repairers. The best-known of these was William Prior, who in 1700 was paid 24d. for repairing a drum for the Corporation.<sup>81</sup> An advertisement in the *Newcastle Courant* in 1724 records Prior's removal from 'Gate-side' to 'the sign of the Musical Instrument in the Side, Newcastle upon Tine' and states that he:

makes and sells all Sorts of Musical and Mathematical Instruments, Musick, Books, Tunes and Songs, Bows, Bridges and Strings, and any Sort of Turn'd Work, at reasonable rates: He also makes and sets Artificial Teeth so neatly, as not to be discovered from natural ones.<sup>82</sup>

Prior (or possibly a son of the same name) was still advertising extensively in 1739, although by this time the artificial teeth were featured more prominently than the musical instruments.<sup>83</sup> He was apparently still active as a musical-instrument maker at the time of his death in 1759.<sup>84</sup> A second instrument-maker, Ralph Agutter, advertised no less than 32 times during the summer of 1712, claiming to be related to the Jennison family of Newcastle.<sup>85</sup> Like the singing men of Durham, Agutter had spent some time away from the area, going so far as to describe himself as 'a Musical- instrument Dealer

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<sup>77</sup> NC 31 July 1731.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 2 January 1725.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 11 December 1725.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 31 July 1731.

<sup>81</sup> TAWS 543/74, CAN, October 1700.

<sup>82</sup> NC 1 February 1724.

<sup>83</sup> e.g. NJ 5 May 1739.

<sup>84</sup> Burial Registers of St. Nicholas's Church, Newcastle, 8 April 1759.

<sup>85</sup> Local papers were published three times weekly.

of London'.<sup>86</sup> However, he died at the end of the summer.<sup>87</sup>

In the early years of the century, when the organ of St. Nicholas's church needed repair, the Corporation called in 'Mr. Smith' (probably one of the sons of 'Father' Bernard Smith) consulting him three times between 1707 and 1711,<sup>88</sup> but by the early 1720s a local organ-builder was working in and around the Newcastle area. In 1728 William Bristowe was paid two guineas for mending 'the little organ' in Durham (probably the organ in the Song School),<sup>89</sup> and in 1730 exhibited a chamber organ of his own making in the Cordwainer's Hall in Newcastle. Bristowe had clearly argued with Solomon Strolger, as his advertisement for the chamber organ invited any interested musician to try out the organ but added that 'the Organist of All-Saints Church in this town of Newcastle, is excepted, for particular reasons'.<sup>90</sup> Bristowe worked in the area until at least 1735.<sup>91</sup>

### III: York

York, like Durham, was home to a large ecclesiastical musical establishment. At the turn of the century, the organist at York Minster was Thomas Wanless, a graduate of Queen's College, Cambridge, and a well-known composer of church anthems. Wanless had been appointed in 1691<sup>92</sup> and his behaviour was evidently exemplary – in 1706 he received an extra payment of fifty shillings 'as an Encouragement for his diligent

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<sup>86</sup> NC 28-30 April 1712.

<sup>87</sup> Burial registers of St. John's Church, Newcastle, 5 September 1712.

<sup>88</sup> Co. Co. 13 September 1707, 22 September 1709, 17 April 1711.

<sup>89</sup> CA DAB 22 June 1728.

<sup>90</sup> NC 1 February 1724.

<sup>91</sup> Baptismal registers of St. John's Church, Newcastle, 8 April 1735.

<sup>92</sup> D. Griffiths, *A Musical Place*, pp. 15-18.

attending the Service of the Church'.<sup>93</sup> The office of Master of the Choristers was taken by one of the singing men of the Minster, Thomas Benson, apparently a local man.<sup>94</sup>

The composition of the Minster choir is not easy to establish. Chamberlain's Accounts indicate a small number of boys: six, each paid £4 per annum.<sup>95</sup> As far as adult voices were concerned, the chief part of the choir were the Vicars Choral, originally established in the twelfth century to deputise for the canons of the Minster. By the eighteenth century, they had become an independent body and were in turn appointing lay singing men, often professional singers, to assist in services.<sup>96</sup> Prior to the Restoration, a minimum of twelve adult voices was required; after the Restoration, this situation apparently continued – in 1663, Chapter Minutes ordered that the choir should be 'made upp to the number of twelve *videlicet* five vicars and seven songmen'.<sup>97</sup> It is likely that the number of singing men remained constant throughout the eighteenth century, but the limited survival of Dean and Chapter records from this period makes it impossible to identify many of these men or to establish their origins. At least one, George Hayden, was not a local man – an entry in the accounts refers to the refunding of his expenses 'in Coming from London'<sup>98</sup> – but no evidence survives to suggest that the Dean and Chapter, like their counterparts in Durham, trawled southern cathedrals for good singers, or that they did not.<sup>99</sup>

One of the singing men was the recipient of a charity bequest and was known as the Sandys Songman, receiving an extra £3 per quarter in addition to the singing man's

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<sup>93</sup> YML E2 (6) CYM, 8 October 1706.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 15 February 1700/1.

<sup>95</sup> e.g. *ibid.*, 24 March 1723.

<sup>96</sup> See Griffiths, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>97</sup> YML H8/8 Chapter Minutes and Drafts, quoted in *ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>98</sup> YML E2(23), CYM, 22 June 1752.

<sup>99</sup> For a full account of the development of York Minster Choir and the details of its organisation, see Griffiths, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-30.

regular salary.<sup>100</sup> The amount of this basic salary is not clear, particularly at the beginning of the century; in 1750, however, one singing man received an annual salary of £10 and this may have applied throughout the century.<sup>101</sup> This compares unfavourably with the established average of £20 offered at this time at Durham Cathedral and it is not surprising that William Greggs and John Blundeville were tempted north. Even with the supplement paid to a Sandys Songman, Blundeville's salary in York was half the £25 he received in Durham.

Wanless's successors as organist were generally short-lived and obscure: Charles Murgatroyd (1712-21), William Davis (four months in 1721), Charles Quarles (1722-27), Edward Salisbury (1728-35).<sup>102</sup> Thomas Benson, master of the choristers, stood in as organist in the short periods between appointments,<sup>103</sup> and also acted as organist of St. Michael le Belfrey, the only other city church with an organ. For this he was paid £5 per annum.<sup>104</sup> A second songman, Thomas Ellway, was parish clerk at St Michael's.<sup>105</sup>

At Benson's death in 1742,<sup>106</sup> the post of organist at St. Michael's was taken over by Charles Pick, son of one of the city waits, at the same salary.<sup>107</sup> York, like Newcastle, generally had five waits, and, as in Newcastle, their behaviour was not always satisfactory. In 1693, Corporation Minutes recorded that:

whereas complaints to have been made ag<sup>t</sup> the Waites of this City that they doe not behave themselves in their respective places as they ought to doe ... the now Lord Mayor has discharged them from exercising their said office.<sup>108</sup>

The cause of the complaints was the disputed status of one of the waits' assistants,

<sup>100</sup> YML E2(23), CYM, 22 June 1752.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 1 May 1750. This payment, from the Dean and Chapter, may have been an additional payment; singing men were generally paid by the Vicars Choral.

<sup>102</sup> For the little that is known about these men, see Griffiths, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-18.

<sup>103</sup> e.g. YML E2 (23), CYM, 15 February 1727/8.

<sup>104</sup> BI PR Y/MB 35 Vestry Minutes of St. Michael le Belfrey, York, *passim*.

<sup>105</sup> YML H9(2) Chapter Acts, 25 January 1750.

<sup>106</sup> Burial Registers of St Michael le Belfrey, York, 29 June 1742.

<sup>107</sup> BI PR Y/MB 35, Vestry Minutes of St. Michael le Belfrey, York, 20 September 1742.

<sup>108</sup> YRO B39 City of York House Book Containing Minutes of the Proceedings of the Corporation, (YHB) 23 October 1693.

Joseph Shaw. Shaw was not a native of the city (his origin is not stated), but had left his place of legal settlement; the Corporation insisted he could not remain in York, in case he and his family became a charge upon the city. A compromise was eventually reached by which Shaw was to return home and apply to become a freeman of York; upon the granting of this he would be allowed to take up the post of wait.<sup>109</sup> Shaw complied with the agreement, the waits were reinstated and Shaw remained a wait until his death in 1703.<sup>110</sup> In addition to the five York waits, the suburb of Skeldergate, on the south side of the river, also employed three waits.<sup>111</sup>

As in Newcastle, the post of wait sometimes descended through a family. Oswald Pick, appointed in 1703,<sup>112</sup> was joined in 1712 by his son Charles;<sup>113</sup> in 1746 Stephen Buckley was succeeded by his son, another Stephen. As the younger Stephen was only fourteen years old, he was allowed to nominate a deputy to act for him until his majority. Corporation Minutes describe Stephen junior as ‘a very good proficient in Musick for his years and of a promising Genius’.<sup>114</sup>

The income from the wait’s office was very small indeed and it is probable that most if not all of the waits derived income from other sources. In 1696 the yearly salary – to be divided between all five waits – was stated in the Chamberlains’ Accounts to be £6 14s. 8d.; additional sums were paid for playing on special occasions.<sup>115</sup> Once every six years they received a new livery, described in 1736 as being made up of fine scarlet cloth (‘scarlet shalloon’) with buttons and trimmings, and silver lace to ornament the hats.<sup>116</sup> Whereas in Newcastle the clothes seem to have become the property of the

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<sup>109</sup> YRO YHB Vol. 40, 6 November 1693.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 30 November 1703.

<sup>111</sup> YRO M23/4: Accounts of the Assembly Rooms (ARA), 23 August 1733.

<sup>112</sup> YRO YHB Vol. 40, 9 September 1703.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Vol. 41, 15 January 1712.

<sup>114</sup> YRO Chamberlain’s Accounts, York Corporation (CAY) Vol. 43 9 May 1746.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., Vol. 29, 2 February 1696/7.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., Vol. 35, 18 October 1736.

waits, the York livery remained the property of the Corporation; thus when Charles Pick died in 1755, his coat was returned to the Corporation and altered to fit his successor.<sup>117</sup>

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the waits' salary was subject to alteration on a number of occasions and seems to have been paid irregularly. A rise to £10 per annum to be divided between the waits in April 1705 seems rarely to have been honoured;<sup>118</sup> and in 1719/20 the salary was settled at a total of £5 per annum, at which level it remained until the second half of the century.<sup>119</sup> It is probable that these payments were a retainer rather than a salary, ensuring the availability of the waits on official occasions. Corporation Accounts and Minutes record extra payments to the waits for playing at such events as the Mayor's swearing-in day and the Sheriff's Feasts,<sup>120</sup> and they were also much in demand for local dances and assemblies, particularly after the opening of the New Assembly Rooms in the early 1730s. The payment for these duties could be substantial – each wait received fifteen shillings per day for the six days of Race Week, which obliged them to play at the dancing assemblies each night and at a varying number of morning concerts.<sup>121</sup> This band was also augmented by other musicians mainly recruited from outside the city. In the 1730s, waits were brought in from Skeldergate, from Ripon, Leeds, and Wakefield;<sup>122</sup> these men brought the band up to a total of about ten members.<sup>123</sup> Rates of payment for these additional musicians varied from half a guinea each per night<sup>124</sup> to 7s. 6d. per night,<sup>125</sup> with the higher sum being paid more frequently. It is not clear whether the York waits in turn visited other local towns and cities.

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<sup>117</sup> **YRO CAY** Vol. 39, 22 April 1755.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 30, 17 December 1705.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, 11 February 1719/20.

<sup>120</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>121</sup> **YRO M23:4**, ARA, 27 July 1732.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 August 1733, 26 August 1734, 9 August 1736, 16 August 1735, 8 August 1741, 21 August 1742, 13 August 1743.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 August 1743.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 August 1732, 26 August 1735.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 August 1736.

Music and musical instruments were available, as in Newcastle, from stationers and booksellers. Little is known about musical-instrument making in the city in the first decades of the century. Minster accounts record the names of men who worked on the organ, as do the Vestry Minutes of St. Michael le Belfrey but little is known of the men involved – Robert Maw, John Brown – or the exact nature of the work they undertook. The ‘Mr. Dallam’ who worked on the organ in the 1720s was presumably one of the well-known family of that name.<sup>126</sup> In other instances, it is not even clear if the work done was to the fabric of the organ, to the case, or was merely cleaning. Beyond these few fragments of information, nothing more is known of musical-instrument manufacture in the city until the 1730s.

#### IV: Peripatetic musicians

Two other kinds of musicians were also active in the north-east at the beginning of the eighteenth century, both peripatetic – dancing masters and theatre musicians.

The activities of dancing masters can be deduced from their frequent advertisements. It is clear that they frequently covered large areas of country in the course of their teaching activities. Hugh Demsey, for instance, taught dancing and fencing using Durham as a base from at least 1723; in 1727 his advertisement in the *Newcastle Courant* stated that: ‘Being desir’d by his Friends, he will attend at the City of Durham 6 Months in the Year every Year ensuing, and will teach at Lancaster and Preston the other 6 Months’.<sup>127</sup> Another dancing master, new to the area in 1731, a Monsieur de la Motte, claimed that he had taught ‘in several places, such as *Carlisle, Lancaster, and Kendal*’.<sup>128</sup> It was an important selling point for these dancing masters

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<sup>126</sup> YML E2 (23), CYM, 28 August 1724.

<sup>127</sup> NC 3 June 1727.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 16 January 1731.

that they could teach the latest and most fashionable dances, and Demsey's travels included frequent visits to London, and an occasional trip to Paris, to learn the latest steps.

In 1724 Demsey extended his activities to Newcastle;<sup>129</sup> this brought him into conflict with a dancing master already based there, a Mr. Lax, who in 1726 retaliated by moving into Durham to teach.<sup>130</sup> This peripatetic lifestyle lent itself particularly to rumours (sometimes malicious), for Demsey was frequently forced to rebut claims (for which he consistently blamed Lax) that he was not returning to the area.<sup>131</sup> Although music is never mentioned in advertisements for these men, it is clear that many were good instrumentalists and there was at least one dancing master in the orchestra for Newcastle concerts in the 1730s;<sup>132</sup> as the century progressed, dancing masters became more prominent in musical activities in both Newcastle and York.

Equally peripatetic were the theatre companies that toured the region. The companies operated on a circuit basis, each year visiting a number of towns on a well-established route. Later in the century, these circuits could be very long, even up to a thousand miles;<sup>133</sup> early companies may also have travelled long distances. In 1721, for instance, Newcastle was visited by 'the Company of Comedians that Plays at York, Nottingham, and Lincoln races';<sup>134</sup> a few years later, 'Mr. Keregan's Company of Comedians' was active both in Newcastle and York.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> NC 14 November 1724.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 20 May 1727.

<sup>131</sup> e.g. NC 3 December 1726.

<sup>132</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>133</sup> See H. Oswald, *The Theatres Royal in Newcastle upon Tyne: desultory notes relating to the drama and its homes, in that place* (Newcastle: Northumberland Press, 1936) and K.E. Robinson, 'Stephen Kemble's Management of the Theatre Royal, Newcastle upon Tyne' in *Essays on the Eighteenth Century English Stage* The Proceedings of a Symposium sponsored by the Manchester University Department of Drama (eds.), Kenneth Richards and Peter Thomson (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 137-148.

<sup>134</sup> NC 3 June 1721.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 25 May 1728, 5 May 1783, YC 20 July 1731.



The theatres were the only places in which ballad operas and other large-scale musical entertainments could be heard.

Newcastle upon Tine, July 1: On Monday next at the Moot-hall, will be acted that incomparable English Opera, call'd the Island Princess: Or, The Generous Portugeze. With all the vocal and instrumental Musick, as it is perform'd originally at the King's Theatre; with several Entertainments of Dancing...<sup>136</sup>

It was not uncommon for London productions to find their way north very quickly. In 1728 two productions of *The Beggar's Opera* were staged in Newcastle at the same time, only four months after the first performances in London. Keregan's company brought with them at least one member of the original London cast, while the other company, belonging to a Mr. Herbert, hired a singer who had performed the role of Macheath in York shortly before.<sup>137</sup> (Herbert's company is also known to have performed in York and in Leeds.)<sup>138</sup> The tag 'as perform'd originally at the King's Theatre' (or at some other London venue) made frequent appearances, indicating a perceived desire on the part of audiences for the latest fashionable productions; the North-East, however geographically remote from the metropolis, could expect to view the new successes relatively quickly.

A substantial number of musicians would have been required for these productions; singing roles were performed by actors and actresses in the company, but instrumentalists may have been hired locally. If this was the case, as it certainly was in later years, even relatively inexperienced local musicians would have been aware of the latest musical developments – even if, unlike the singers at Durham Cathedral, they did not themselves travel to the capital.

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<sup>136</sup> NC 1 July 1721.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 4 May, 25 May 1728.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 1 July 1721.

At the beginning of the century, the three centres of Newcastle, Durham and York were not isolated musically but enjoyed an exchange and intercommunication between musicians, with some performers (Greggs and Blundeville, for instance) moving from one centre to another and others making brief visits for 'improvement' (Smith) or for work purposes (Bristowe). Waits from surrounding towns worked in York during Race Week; the choir of Durham Cathedral made annual visits to Newcastle to sing at the Feast of the Sons of the Clergy.<sup>139</sup> This movement extended into the surrounding countryside; James Hesletine of Durham taught at least 'one day in the Week in the Country' (presumably teaching the families of local gentry),<sup>140</sup> and other local musicians such as Powell and Strolger may also have done so. Visits to London for instruction were relatively common, and some musicians, such as Hesletine, came to the area from the capital and from other regions of the country. Theatre companies brought the latest London musical successes to the North-East, and visitors to the area, many merely passing through, also brought the newest developments; these visitors were the first known musicians to give concerts in the region.

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<sup>139</sup> NC 15 September 1722.

<sup>140</sup> CA DAB 9 June 1730.



Plate 5: Charles Avison: painting probably by F. Lindo.

# 3

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUBSCRIPTION SERIES IN YORK AND NEWCASTLE

### I: Early concerts

The earliest known concerts in the North-East were held forty years after John Banister's first concerts in London in the late seventeenth century, although it is not clear whether the North was behind the fashionable metropolis in adopting the new entertainments or whether the delay is an illusion created by a dearth of sources. Not until the first newspapers appear (in 1711 in Newcastle, in 1722 in York) is there a regular and (more-or-less) reliable source of information about commercial concerts in the form of advertisements, reviews etc. It is possible therefore that a concert given in 1709 during the Assizes in York was not the first in the area but merely the first-known. The concert was put on by visitors to the city.

York, August the 8<sup>th</sup>. During the Sizes will be perform'd a Consort of Musick, by Mr. Holcomb, Mr. Corbet, &c. Who will perform the same in Nottingham the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, after the Races are over, viz. All the choicest Songs out of all the new Operas.<sup>1</sup>

References to Assize Week concerts are rare in York, although they may have been more common than surviving evidence suggests; references in the account books of a local music-lover, D'Arcy Dawes, to concerts in August in the late 1720s may be further examples.<sup>2</sup> Newcastle's earliest known concert was recorded in 1712 when unknown performers offered 'Opera-Tunes, Italian Solio's, Sonata's, Overtures, &c. upon the following Instruments, viz. Spinett, Trumpet, Hautboy, Violins, Bass-Viols, Bassoons, &c'.<sup>3</sup>

For the next few years, only isolated concerts are known in Newcastle and York. No detailed programmes survive. In May 1725 a visit was made to Newcastle by the 'famous Lute-Master' mentioned above:

who also sings and plays the best Italian and English Opera Songs, as also his Daughter, who is about nine Years of Age, sings Italian and English Opera Songs, to the Admiration of all that have heard her.<sup>4</sup>

Nathaniel and Charles Love, also clearly visitors to the area, gave concerts in Sunderland and Newcastle on 12 and 15 November 1733 respectively, performing identical programmes:

of Musick Perform'd on the *Trumpet, French-Horn, Hautboy,* and *German Flutes* taken out of the most celebrated Operas, compos'd by Mr. *Handel*, and a Cuckoo *Solo*, compos'd by Mr. *Love*, Senior will be play'd; after that a Quaker's Sermon will be perform'd on a single Violin, by the said Mr. *Love*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Daily Courant*, 1 August 1709, quoted in M. Tilmouth, 'A Calendar of References to Music in Newspapers published in London and the Provinces (1660-1719)', *RMA Research Chronicle*, No. 1 1961, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> YML Add MS 65/1: Account Book of D'Arcy Dawes, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> NC 19-21 May 1712.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 May 1725. See Chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 November 1733.

A ball was held after this concert, setting a precedent that was frequently followed by later concerts.<sup>6</sup>

By the early 1720s, if not before, a number of local musicians were also established and active in concert-promotion; two Newcastle concerts in 1733 were given ‘by a Sett of the finest and best Masters from York, Durham, &c.’<sup>7</sup> and ‘by the best Masters in these Parts’<sup>8</sup> indicating that there was already co-operation between local musicians at this early stage, although the extent and frequency of such co-operation cannot be ascertained. In June 1734 a local man, Claudius Heron, gave a concert for his own benefit in Newcastle performing ‘A *Concerto and Solo* upon the *Violoncello*, with select Pieces for *French Horns*, and other Instruments’,<sup>9</sup> and a year later a singing man from Durham Cathedral, Thomas Mountier, gave the first known concert in Durham,<sup>10</sup> also giving a concert in Newcastle a few weeks before.<sup>11</sup> (See Table 3.1, p. 44)

No purpose-built concert halls existed in either Newcastle or Durham in 1700 and none was built during the eighteenth century; the Durham concert was held at the Grammar School there,<sup>12</sup> and the Newcastle concerts took place in a variety of venues from ‘Mr. Harris’s dancing-school on Westgate Road’<sup>13</sup> to ‘Mrs. Benson’s Assembly-Rooms’,<sup>14</sup> and the Grammar School, also on Westgate Road.<sup>15</sup> (Appendix 8) (Westgate

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<sup>6</sup> John Marsh records going to a concert in Salisbury in April 1779 after which some officers present insisted on a dance; both the concert managers and Marsh believed this undesirable as ‘the concert wo’d then become a secondary matter or be consider’d as a mere introduction to the dance’. Brian Robins (ed.), *The John Marsh Journals, The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer (1754-1828)* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1998), p. 194.

<sup>7</sup> NC 29 September 1733.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1 December 1733.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1 June 1734. No other information about Heron can be discovered at this time.

<sup>10</sup> NI 21 June 1735.

<sup>11</sup> NC 24 May 1735.

<sup>12</sup> NI 21 June 1735.

<sup>13</sup> NC 19-21 May 1712.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 10 November 1733.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 1 June 1734.

**Table 3.1: Concerts given by visitors to the area: 1700-1735**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1709: 8 August	York	York, August the 8 <sup>th</sup> . During the Sizes will be perform'd a Consort of Music, by Mr. Holcomb, Mr. Corbet, &c. Who will perform the same in Nottingham the 16 <sup>th</sup> , 17 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> , after the Races are over, viz. All the choicest Songs out of all the new Operas. <b><i>Daily Courant</i>, 1 August 1709.</b>
1712: 21 May	Newcastle	'a CONSORT of Instrumental Music' at Mr. Harris's Dancing-School in Westgate 'Opera Tunes; Italian-Solio's, Sonata's, Overtures, &c. upon the following Instruments, viz, Spinett, Trumpet, Hautboy, Violins, Bass-Viols, Bassoon, &c.' <b>NC 19-21 May 1712</b>
1725: 24 May	Newcastle	'A Consort of Vocal and Instrumental MUSICK' by a 'famous Lute-Master' 'at the Grammar School' <b>NC 22 May 1725.</b>
1725: 26 May	Newcastle	[as 24 May]
1727: 9 August	York	'At Mr. Dubourgh's concert' <b>D'Arcy Dawes</b>
1727: 11 August	York	'At Mr. Granom's concert' <b>D'Arcy Dawes</b>
1728: 20 August	York	[unidentified concert] <b>D'Arcy Dawes</b>
1728: 16 November	York	'At Mr. Ellis's Concert' <b>D'Arcy Dawes</b>
1731: 22 August	York	[unidentified concert] <b>D'Arcy Dawes</b>
1733: 8 October	Newcastle	'A Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music ... by a Sett of the finest and best Masters from York, Durham, &c.' <b>NC 29 September 1733</b>
1733: 12 November	Sunderland	'A CONCERT of MUSICK for the benefit of Mr. Nathaniel and Mr. Charles Love ... at the Long Room, in Sunderland' [Mrs Robson's] 'There will be several Pieces of Musick Perform'd on the <i>Trumpet</i> , <i>French-Horn</i> , <i>Hautboy</i> and <i>German Flutes</i> taken out of the most celebrated Operas, compos'd by Mr. <i>Handel</i> , and a Cuckoo Solo, compos'd by Mr. <i>Love</i> , Senior will be play'd; after that a Quaker's Sermon will be perform'd on a single Violin, by the said Mr. Love.'
1733: 15 November	Newcastle	<b>NC 10 December 1733</b> 'A CONCERT of MUSICK' for the 'Benefit of Mr. Nathaniel and Mr. Charles Love ... At Mrs Benson's Assembly Rooms' [repertoire as 12 November]

1733: 6 December	Newcastle	'A fine Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music at Mrs Benson's Assembly Room ... by the best Masters in these Parts' <b>NC 1 December 1733</b>
1734: 12 June	Newcastle	'A Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music ... for the Benefit of Mr. Claudius Heron' at the Grammar School in Westgate' 'A <i>Concerto</i> and <i>Solo</i> , upon the <i>Violoncello</i> , with select Pieces for <i>French Horns</i> , and other Instruments, by extraordinary Hands.' <b>NC 1 June 1734</b>
1735: 4 June	Newcastle	'A Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music for the <i>Benefit</i> of Mr. Mountier' at the Grammar School. <b>NC 24 May 1734</b>
1735: 9 July	Durham	'A CONCERT of <i>Vocal and Instrumental MUSICK</i> ' for the 'Benefit of Mr. Mountier at the Grammar School in Durham' <b>NI 21 June 1735</b>

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Road was on the western rural edge of the city in a generally well-to-do area.) In York, the building of a new and large Assembly Room on Blake Street in the early 1730s offered a regular venue for concerts; the Rooms were intended from the beginning to accommodate the concerts as well as the dancing assemblies, although it is not clear what arrangements were made for the concert band.<sup>16</sup> The original design may not have had any provision for musicians at all; an Assembly Room minute of July 1732 records an order 'that a Gallery be built for the Music betwixt y<sup>e</sup> Middle Column in y<sup>e</sup> Great Room next y<sup>e</sup> Recess, And that the Same be borne up by Iron Cramps'.<sup>17</sup> This gallery, which survived until 1755,<sup>18</sup> must have been reasonably large if it could comfortably accommodate ten musicians (the usual size of the Assembly Room band),<sup>19</sup> but could not have been satisfactory for the larger band required for concerts and it appears that the performers at concerts were placed at one end of the Great Room on temporary stages.<sup>20</sup> Despite these limitations, the Assembly Rooms became the regular venue for

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<sup>16</sup> Griffiths, op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 28 July 1732.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 24 May 1755.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., passim..

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 29 November 1733: 'Ordered that Mr. Dickinson be paid his Bill for the Musick Stage.'



concerts in York from their opening and other venues were rarely used.<sup>21</sup> Race Week concerts were established in the Assembly Rooms by 1733 and may have been a well-established tradition before this time.<sup>22</sup>

## **II: First subscription series**

York possessed a ‘musick-club’ which met (possibly weekly) at the George Inn in Coney Street from around 1724;<sup>23</sup> this was probably a gathering of gentlemen to sing catches and glees in a congenially relaxed environment. The impetus for a regular series of winter concerts may have grown out of this society. A series was certainly established by 1730 in the new Assembly Rooms,<sup>24</sup> and in 1732 the Assembly Rooms meetings were altered to suit the convenience of the Gentlemen Directors ‘Meeting to go to the Concert on ffridays’.<sup>25</sup> These concerts were organised by a body called the Musick Assembly which was plainly made up of private gentlemen – over the years, the rent for hire of the Assembly Rooms was paid by a variety of men who included two doctors, four vicars and a number of plain Misters; it may be that the Musick Assembly was an offshoot of a musical club or society (perhaps that at the George), set up specifically to run the subscription series. The Musick Assembly paid £20 per annum for the use of a room in the Assembly Rooms building; in this room were held the winter concerts and a number of morning concerts in Race Week as well as concerts promoted by visitors.<sup>26</sup> A dearth of advertisements suggests that the winter series’ concerts were

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix Maps.

<sup>22</sup> YRO M23:1 ARM, 27 July 1733.

<sup>23</sup> YML Add MS 65/1: Account Book of D’Arcy Dawes, 1 October 1724.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 30 October 1730.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 3 November 1732.

<sup>26</sup> YML Add MS 65/1: Account Book of D’Arcy Dawes, e.g. 22 August 1737.

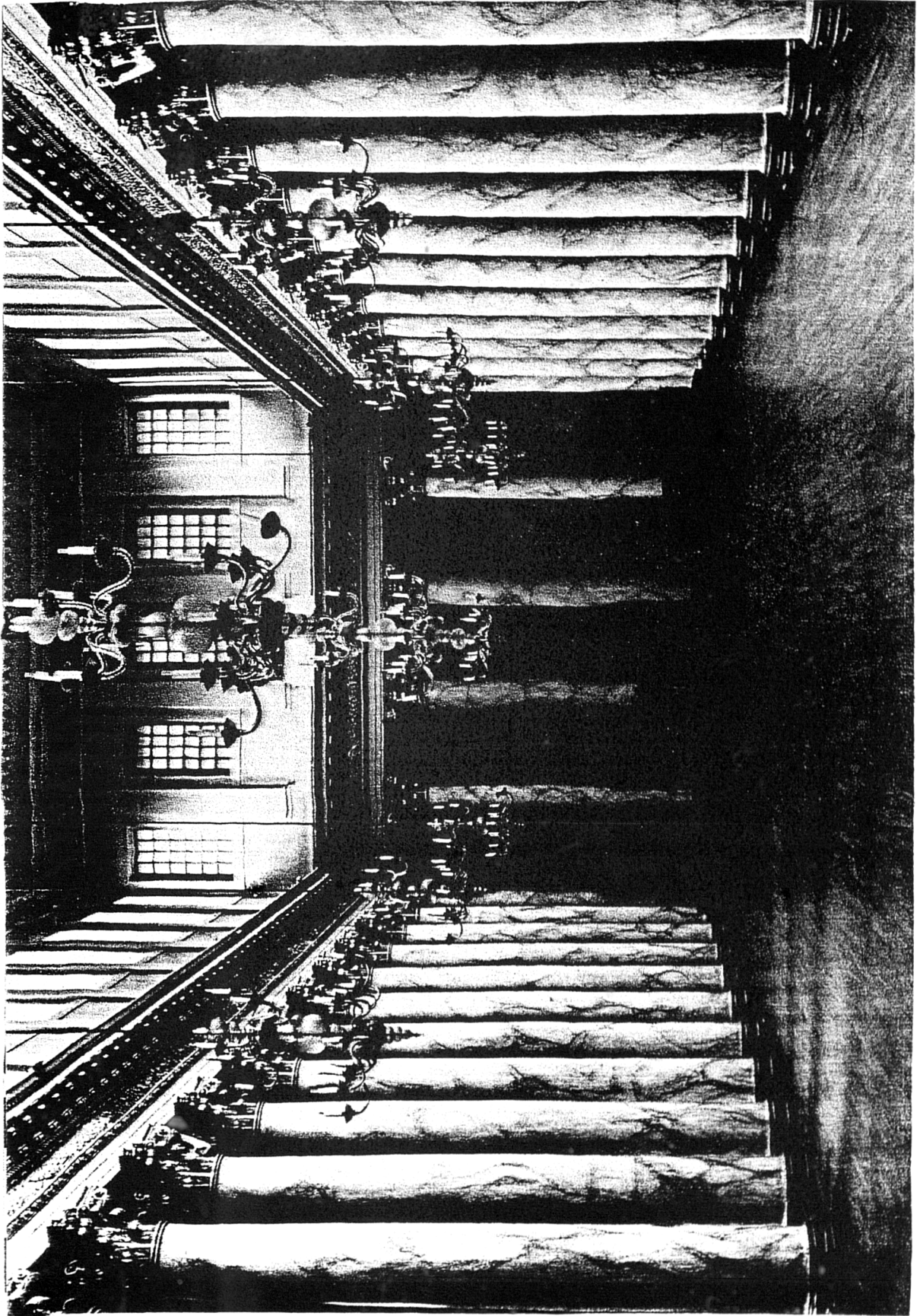


Plate 6: The Great Assembly Room, Blake Street, York.

private at this period but regular public benefits were advertised for the principal performers.<sup>27</sup>

The musical director of these concerts was John Hebden, a cellist and bassoonist, who, according to the Assembly Room Minutes, 'has served the consert in a very oblidgeing and diligent Manner'.<sup>28</sup> He was associated with the concerts from at least March 1733 when he held a benefit in 'Mr. Haughton's Great Room in the Minster Yard';<sup>29</sup> from 1736, his annual benefit was held in the Blake Street Assembly Rooms.<sup>30</sup> Hebden and the Gentlemen Directors of the Musick Assembly had ambitious plans for the series and, supported by subscriptions and by profitable stocks in the Assembly Rooms, they set about achieving them. Their intention was clearly to reflect the present trends in music in London, particularly the fashion for Italian performers, and a number of Italian instrumentalists and singers were hired for the series in the late 1730s. The earliest of these visitors was the violinist Cattani who was associated with the concerts from 1733 until 1740.<sup>31</sup> Other performers included Signors Abacho and Palmi (between February 1737 and December 1738) and Signor Bitti (1737-1749).<sup>32</sup>

The establishment of a regular winter series of concerts in Newcastle did not take place until around five years after the setting up of the York concerts. The apparent catalyst for the series was the return to the city of a young local musician, Charles Avison. Avison was the son of a Newcastle wait, Richard Avison, who had come to the

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<sup>27</sup> e.g. YC 27 February 1733.

<sup>28</sup> YRO M23:1 ARM, 4 December 1736.

<sup>29</sup> YC 27 February 1733.

<sup>30</sup> YRO M23:1 ARM, 4 December 1736.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 20 December 1733; YC 18 March 1740.

<sup>32</sup> YRO M23:1 ARM, 7 February 1736/7, 10 December 1737, 24 January 1737/8; YC 18 March 1740. Sig. Abacho was probably Joseph-Marie-Clément Dall'Abacho, a Dutch composer with Italian ancestry. He is known to have been in England from c1740. Cattanei may be identified with Giovanni Cattaneo (? –c1762), an Italian violinist, who was resident in London at this time as was Alexander Bitti. Cattani subscribed to Avison's Op. 4.

city (possibly from Yorkshire)<sup>33</sup> around 1702.<sup>34</sup> Charles (who was baptised in February 1708/9)<sup>35</sup> was the fifth child of nine and one of only two to survive infancy.<sup>36</sup> Nothing is known of his early life. He was clearly ambitious and, like the Durham Cathedral singers, had journeyed to London for 'improvement'. He may also have travelled abroad, to France or Italy, but no clear evidence of this survives and may have been suggested by his association with the composer Geminiani who was his teacher.<sup>37</sup> The earliest reference to Avison's activities dates from 1734; on 20 March that year he held a benefit concert in Hickford's Rooms in London, offering a programme of concertos by Corelli and Geminiani, songs by Handel and solos on the German flute, violin and harpsichord.<sup>38</sup>

A later story claimed that in April 1735 Avison was offered the post of organist at York Minster after the dismissal of the previous holder of the post, Edward Salisbury.<sup>39</sup> The claim was made in a letter to the *Newcastle Journal* in 1759 and the late date, together with the fact that the writer was partisan to Avison and was writing to defend him in a dispute, must cast some doubt on the reliability of the claim. Avison was certainly available at the time but no evidence of any offer to him remains in Minster records. By the end of 1735 Avison had returned to Newcastle and obtained an appointment as organist of St John's Church at a salary of £20 per annum.<sup>40</sup> A proposal to provide an organ for St. John's had been put forward almost exactly a year earlier<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The organist of Holy Trinity, Hull, William Avison, may have been Charles Avison's cousin. [See G.H. Smith, *A History of Hull Organs and Organists* (London/Hull: A. Brown, 1910)]. William subscribed to Charles's music.

<sup>34</sup> TAWS 543/76 Chamberlain's Accounts, October 1702.

<sup>35</sup> Baptismal registers of St. John's Church, Newcastle, 16 February 1708/9.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. passim. His elder brother, Edward, became a prosperous staymaker in Newcastle.

<sup>37</sup> *NJ* 20-27 December 1760.

<sup>38</sup> Arthur H. Scouten (ed.), *The London Stage 1660-1800* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), Part 3, 1729-1747, p. 278. Avison's inclusion of Handel is interesting in view of the controversy that later centred on his opinion of the composer. See below, Chapter 4.

<sup>39</sup> *NJ* 10-17 March 1759. For the story of Salisbury's dismissal, see Griffiths, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

<sup>40</sup> Co. Co. 13 October 1735. The York post would have paid £40 per annum.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 17 October 1734.

and, as the instrument was still not completed at the time of Avison's appointment, the Corporation stipulated that he should not be paid until the organ was playable.<sup>42</sup> He did not receive his first salary payment until July 1736.<sup>43</sup>

The setting up of a winter subscription series in Newcastle was advertised a month before Avison's appointment to St. John's. Concerts were to be held at the Assembly Rooms (probably rooms in the Groat Market) on alternate Thursdays from 2 October 1735 until Lady Day 1736.<sup>44</sup> The cost of a subscription was 10s. 6d.,<sup>45</sup> and each concert was expected to last from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m.<sup>46</sup> Single tickets would admit either one Gentleman or two Ladies and were available from Messrs. Brown and Sanderson, watchmakers.<sup>47</sup>

Some years later, in 1758, in the course of a dispute that arose over conditions relating to tickets, Avison wrote a letter to the *Newcastle Courant* giving an account of the origin of the series. He claimed that:

when the Concert was first set on Foot ... it was undertaken by twelve Gentlemen, who procured above One hundred and Seventy Subscriptions for twelve Concerts, at Half a Guinea each Ticket ...<sup>48</sup>

Although the series was ostensibly managed by these Gentlemen (as the York series was managed by the Gentlemen of the Musick Assembly), Avison had the musical direction of it from the beginning, although a dispute with the leader of his band at the end of the first series indicates that this might not have been the original intention of the directors. The band was led by a Swiss violinist (whose name does not survive); he had

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<sup>42</sup> Co. Co. 13 October 1735.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 12 July 1736.

<sup>44</sup> For the location of the rooms in the Groat Market see Appendix 8.

<sup>45</sup> NC 20 September 1735.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 27 September 1735.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 20 September 1735.

<sup>48</sup> NJ 4-11 November 1758. At no point does Avison state whether the idea for the series originated with the Gentlemen Directors or with Avison himself. Avison's connection with Hickford's Rooms in London, where a subscription series was held, suggests that he may have brought the idea, or the enthusiasm for it, back north with him. It is ironic, if that is the case, that the series at Hickford's Rooms lapsed in the early 1740s, just as Avison's series was thriving.

apparently lived in Newcastle for some years and was much admired by audiences. During the dispute, factions quickly formed, on one side in Avison's favour and on the other in support of the Swiss violinist; these two sides conducted much of the dispute through letters written to the *Newcastle Courant*. The letters are highly partisan, often vicious and, at times, brutal and extremely unpleasant. The power of the press was already well-established – the Swiss claimed at one point that he was threatened by one of the directors of the Concerts that if he did not co-operate 'he would put him in the News the very next Week for it'.<sup>49</sup>

The Swiss violinist (described by Avison's partisans as 'peevisish and petulant')<sup>50</sup> claimed that it had been the original intention of the directors that the musical direction should be left to two 'indifferent' (i.e. disinterested) people (presumably chosen from amongst the directors) and that none of the performers should take precedence over the others but should be 'upon a Level'. Avison, he insisted, had pushed himself forward and taken charge.<sup>51</sup> He accused Avison of refusing the Swiss and his friends the use of the music for practice purposes and of frequently changing the concert programmes after the rehearsal, sometimes less than two hours before the concert, thus forcing the performers to sight-read the new music.<sup>52</sup> Controversy raged in the newspaper letters over whether it was unreasonable to expect professional musicians to regularly sight-read in performance or whether, as Avison's supporters claimed, it was a necessary skill which no decent professional musician would think twice about.<sup>53</sup> (This argument ignored the fact that at least some of Avison's orchestral players were amateurs – the Gentlemen Directors<sup>54</sup> – whose sight-reading skills might be considered suspect; changing the programme at short notice might be unwise for that reason alone.)

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<sup>49</sup> NC 17 April 1736.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 10 April 1736.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 17 April 1736.

<sup>52</sup> Idem.

<sup>53</sup> NC 17 April, 24 April 1736.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 24 July 1758.

The wages of the Swiss violinist were argued over at length. The supporters of Avison suggested that the ten shillings per night already paid was generous;<sup>55</sup> the partisans of the Swiss claimed that his demand for fifteen shillings per night was not greedy.<sup>56</sup> Avison's supporters said that the Swiss's head had been turned by uncritical acclaim from some parts of his audience and that he thought himself indispensable.<sup>57</sup> The Swiss claimed that he and his friends in the band (including a second violinist whose nickname *Mr. Light-Heels* suggests that he was a dancing master) had been threatened and victimised.<sup>58</sup> The Swiss withdrew from the concerts and Avison added insult to injury by replacing him as leader with a twelve-year-old boy (possibly Avison's apprentice, George Williams).<sup>59</sup> Exaggerated criticisms of the quality of playing, both of the Swiss and of the boy, ended in a challenge to a musical duel. Each violinist was to bring a cellist and a pre-rehearsed piece of music to an agreed location; after a performance of each of these works, the music was to be exchanged and each protagonist was to sight-read the other's choice. Wrangles about suitable judges ended in the suggestion, accepted by both sides, that the duel should be decided by the organist of Durham Cathedral, James Hesletine, but it is likely that he knew nothing of the matter; when the Swiss arrived at the scene of the duel – Mrs. Hill's in the Fleshmarket – on Wednesday 19 May between 8 and 9 pm, Hesletine was not there. The Swiss later claimed that entirely new and unacceptable proposals for the contest were then put to him and he withdrew in a rage, from Mrs. Hill's, the competition and, apparently, from Newcastle itself.<sup>60</sup> A week later Avison's supporters, ungracious in victory, published a long and vicious mock obituary for the Swiss.

We thought it would not be amiss to give a more satisfactory and  
circumstantial Account of the Death of a little lean choleric

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<sup>55</sup> NC 24 April 1736.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 17 April 1736.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 10 April 1736.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 24 April 1736.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 17 April 1736.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 29 May 1736.

Fidler, which happened on the 19<sup>th</sup> Instant, between the hours of Nine and Ten in the Evening ...

He began about half an Hour before he died to rave much, and delivered himself in broken Sentences; he had his black Fiddle (a bad Omen!) in his Right Hand, and his Fiddle-stick in his left, a Plaister of Crotchets of his own composing defended his Vitals; thus arm'd, he stood, when Time, with his Scythe, appear'd for once in the shape of a young Fidler ... the Moment his feeble Eyes met his dreadful Antagonist, his Agonies seiz'd him ... he spit, star'd, stunk, and dy'd.<sup>61</sup>

The unfortunate violinist is one of the few known musicians connected with these early concerts who can be identified; another, the vocal soloist for the series, is the Durham singing man, Thomas Mountier.<sup>62</sup> Mountier was sworn into the choir in late April 1735 at a salary of £50 per annum suggesting that the Dean and Chapter thought highly of him.<sup>63</sup> He is almost certainly the man whom Charles Burney described as London's favourite concert singer in 1731;<sup>64</sup> he had been associated with the choir of Chichester Cathedral before establishing himself in London as a singer in Handel's operas.<sup>65</sup> His reasons for moving north are not known, although the salary must have been an inducement and he may have been friendly with Avison – they were in the capital at the same time. He clearly had no intention of giving up his concert activities, as shown by benefit concerts he held in Newcastle and Durham – the Newcastle concert was a mere six weeks after Mountier's arrival in the area.

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<sup>61</sup> NC 29 May 1736. If the letter writer is not taking liberties with the truth, the Swiss was left-handed.

<sup>62</sup> NC 24 April 1736.

<sup>63</sup> CA DAB 26 April 1735.

<sup>64</sup> Burney, *A General History*, Vol. II p. 1001.

<sup>65</sup> L.M.Middleton., 'Mountier, Thomas', *The Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. L. Stephen and S. Lee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963-4 [reprint]).



### III: Ambitious plans and financial restraints

Adjustments to subscription prices for the second season of the Newcastle concerts indicate that the series was not secure financially. The cost of subscription was doubled to a guinea, a price which remained constant for the third, 1737-8, season. The fourth season saw a significant change in the organisation of the series. An advertisement in the *Newcastle Courant* in July 1738 made it clear that the Gentlemen 'who first promoted the SUBSCRIPTION CONCERT [have] resigned the Management of it to Mr. Avison'.<sup>66</sup> This gave Avison both musical and financial direction of the series; it was clearly an amicable transfer of authority as the advertisement made it clear that the Gentlemen intended to continue to play in the band and 'assist him with their Performance, &c'.<sup>67</sup>

In his 1758 letter to the *Courant*, Avison explained the background to these early changes. He claimed that the large number of people who subscribed to the first series (a total of 170) led the managers to entertain plans that were too ambitious. They 'thought of nothing so much as the Improvement of the Concert: It was, therefore, determined to encrease the Number of Performers, and, consequently, their Expences'.<sup>68</sup> The increase in subscription costs for the second series was intended to cover these additional expenses but instead produced an immediate fall in the number of subscribers. Avison claimed that after the first series, the number of subscribers never exceeded 110, suggesting that on occasions it may have been lower.<sup>69</sup> No other income was apparently available and the managers abandoned their ambitions after the third series. Avison commented that: 'This advance of the subscription not answering their Account, the

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<sup>66</sup> NC 29 July 1738

<sup>67</sup> Idem.

<sup>68</sup> NJ 4-11 November 1758.

<sup>69</sup> Idem.

Concert ... was given up to my Care alone'.<sup>70</sup> He re-established the series 'on its first footing' and advertisements show that he immediately reduced the subscription to its original level of half a guinea for the 1738-9 season.<sup>71</sup> It is probable that he also moderated the former managers' ambitious schemes.

Almost nothing is known of the repertoire performed at these concerts, or of the managers' plans or Avison's revised management. Only one review survives in local papers, for a concert given on 28 November 1739; the review is unusually informative on the musical content of the concert.

On Wednesday last were perform'd, with great Applause, at Mr. Avison's Concert in the Assembly-Room, upon twenty-six Instruments, and by a proper Number of Voices from Durham, the three following celebrated Pieces of Vocal and Instrumental Musick, composed by the greatest Masters of the Age, viz. *To Arms* and *Britons strike Home*; *the Oratorio of Saul*; and *The Masque of Acis*. The Gentlemen and Ladies join'd in the Chorus's at the end of each Song; all present saluted the Performers with loud Peals of Claps, acknowledging a general satisfaction.<sup>72</sup>

If this is typical of other concerts organised by Avison at this time, it is evident that the influence of Durham Cathedral singers on repertoire heard in Newcastle was already strong. None of the vocal works mentioned in the review could have been performed with the limited vocal resources available to Avison in Newcastle.

In York, financial constraints were also making themselves felt in the late 1730s. Here, the Gentlemen of the Musick Assembly and their musical director, John Hebden, were finding their efforts to bring the best Italian performers to the city expensive. In November 1739 the Directors of the Assembly Rooms, in giving permission for the use

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<sup>70</sup> *NJ* 4-11 November 1758.

<sup>71</sup> *NC* 29 July 1738.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 December 1739.

of the rooms for the concert series, referred to ‘the extraordinary Expence that the Gentlemen Directors of the Concert are at’;<sup>73</sup> no less than five Italian performers had been hired for the winter – Cattani and Bitti who remained from previous series and three newcomers, Signor Piantanida (described by the *York Courant*, as ‘a very fine musician’), Piantanida’s wife, Signora Posterla and Signora Ciara Posterla (possibly Signora Posterla’s sister).<sup>74</sup>

The inevitable corollary of the Italian arrivals was a series of benefits in the New Year, interrupting the flow of the subscription series and extending it well into the early summer. All the Italians took part in these benefits, the Posterlas providing the vocal parts and Piantanida, Cattani and Bitti playing instrumental parts. Hebden’s own benefit was also in the spring and one of these, on 29 January 1740, included the first known appearance as a concert soloist of the new Minster organist, James Nares. Nares had obtained the post five years earlier at the age of 20, at the time of the alleged offer to Charles Avison. He was a Middlesex man and had been a chorister at the Chapel Royal and assistant organist at Windsor Castle before taking up the Yorkshire post.<sup>75</sup>

Many of the Italians were still, or again, in the area in August 1740 when Piantanida, Bitti and the Posterlas went off to Scarborough for a concert; Hebden went with them under the name of Signor Hebdeni – a ruse which probably deceived no-one.<sup>76</sup> When the new series of winter concerts began at the end of the year, the Italians were still present and becoming more demanding. Hebden had evidently promised them two benefits as a group but each demanded an additional personal benefit (with the exception of Piantanida and the Posterlas who shared a benefit). Taking into account

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<sup>73</sup> YRO M23:1 ARM 28 November 1739.

<sup>74</sup> YC 23 October 1739. Giovanni Piantanida, an Italian violinist, had come to London c1739 and stayed only a few years, leaving in 1742. He later settled in Bologna. [Guido Salvetti, ‘Piantanida, Giovanni’, *Grove*, 14, p. 716]. Although Piantanida’s wife is often known elsewhere as ‘la Pasterla’, she is here referred as ‘Posterla’ to accord with the spelling of her name in York records.

<sup>75</sup> Watkins Shaw, ‘Nares, James’, *Grove*, 13, pp. 38-9.

<sup>76</sup> YC 19 August 1740.

Hebden's own benefit, this meant that six benefits in as many weeks interrupted the subscription series from the end of January until the beginning of March 1741.<sup>77</sup> As admission to these concerts was not included in the subscription price, the generosity of York music-lovers must have been strained.

Lack of information makes it difficult to assess the influence of the presence of the Italian performers on the music heard at concerts in York. Some of the benefits included pieces composed by Bitti;<sup>78</sup> it is likely that many of the instrumental solos performed had also been composed by their performers. Hebden played solos on bassoon and cello<sup>79</sup> and Nares on harpsichord.<sup>80</sup> Cattani's benefit in February 1741 included 'several select Pieces on the Violin, Violoncello, Bassoon, Harpsichord, Vox Humana, Trumpets, French horn and Timballo, &c.'<sup>81</sup> No details of the songs were recorded but many must have been from the fashionable operas, and in 1741 the Italians performed an elegant compliment to their hosts that was probably composed by one of their number:

A DRAMATICA SERENATA, Addressed to the Nobility and Gentry of *Yorkshire*, and the City of *York*, by Signora *Posterla* and Signora *Chiara Posterla*, in the Characters of MELPOMENE and CALLIOPE, Which will finish with a GRAND CHORUS of many Voices, accompanied by all Sorts of Instruments.

N.B. There will be Books of the *Serenata* translated into *English* sold in the Rooms.<sup>82</sup>

Much the same pattern of concerts was evident in the following, 1741-2, season. After a visit by the Italians to Hull in late September,<sup>83</sup> the winter concerts began on 16 October with the promise that 'the Orchestre will be the Same as the Winter before,

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<sup>77</sup> YC 14 January, 27 January, 3 February, 17 February, 24 February 1741.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 26 February 1740.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 27 January 1741.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 15 January 1740.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 10 February 1741.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 24 February 1741.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 15 September 1741.

many of the Compositions entirely new, with some Serenata's never before heard'.<sup>84</sup> All the Italians were still there and the visiting French horn virtuoso, Mr. Charles, was pressed into service in the New Year benefits when he visited the city (as had the Welsh harpist, Mr. Parry, the previous year).<sup>85</sup> Charles also insisted upon holding a benefit.<sup>86</sup>

The minutes of the Assembly Room indicate that the expense of supporting all these soloists was beginning to cause problems. Hebden and the Music Assembly were in arrears to the Rooms for both rent and coals, having paid nothing since 1740.<sup>87</sup> On 5 April 1742, the Directors of the Rooms ordered their Steward to recover the arrears;<sup>88</sup> five days later, members of the Musick Assembly sneaked into the Rooms in the early hours of the morning to remove music books and instruments belonging to the Assembly to prevent them being seized to pay creditors.<sup>89</sup> The Assembly Room Directors hurriedly convened another meeting and dispatched their Steward again to one of the gentlemen suspected of being involved – a local vicar – to discover 'whether he will deliver up the instruments, and Musick Books belonging to the Musick Assembly, in order to be safely deposited for the use of any future Concert'.<sup>90</sup>

No immediate response seems to have been forthcoming. The subscription series due to begin in October did not take place. Demand for a series was high, however, and in late November a number of subscribers began to urge the organisation of a series as quickly as possible.<sup>91</sup> Appeals were published in the *York Courant* on 7 December for the return of the music and instruments.<sup>92</sup> The old Directors temporarily held up proceedings by demanding that the payment of arrears should be the responsibility of the

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<sup>84</sup> YC 6 October 1741.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 5 January 1742.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 9 February 1742.

<sup>87</sup> YRO M23:1 ARM 5 April 1742.

<sup>88</sup> Idem.

<sup>89</sup> YC 20 April 1742.

<sup>90</sup> YRO M23:1 ARM 23 April 1742.

<sup>91</sup> YC 23 November 1742.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 7 December 1742.

new Directors but eventually gave way and an advertisement in the *Courant* of 28 December resolved the issue.

The Gentlemen who have reserv'd the Musical Books and Instruments of the last Concert with a constant design of producing them to the Publick when they might be of Service, now give notice to the Subscribers to the last Concert that upon their chusing ... Directors to conduct a future Concert, they will put those Books and Instruments into the Custody of those new Directors, upon their Application and giving a proper Receipt.<sup>93</sup>

The new series eventually began on 14 January 1743;<sup>94</sup> the exact cost of subscription is not known but it is probable that it was half a guinea (as proposed in plans put forward in November 1742).<sup>95</sup> For the Directors of the Assembly Rooms, the affair dragged on until the end of the year when they finally decided they were unlikely to recover the £11 3s. 7d. arrears still owed by the old Concert. They confiscated the interest owing to the Concert on its shares in the Assembly Rooms (£4 7s. 6d) and wrote off the rest of the debt.<sup>96</sup>

This first attempt to bring up-to-date, fashionable music to York therefore ended in financial disaster. Hebden left the city at this time for London.<sup>97</sup> The last known reference to him dates from 1751 when he wrote to a friend in York to contradict a premature announcement of his death in 'a very facetious Letter, under his own Hand, occasioned by his reading Himself Dead in Print'.<sup>98</sup>

The Musick Club at the George that may have contributed to the beginnings of the subscription series in York appears to have thrived until around 1746 but may have then

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<sup>93</sup> *YC* 28 December 1742.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 January 1743.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 November 1742.

<sup>96</sup> *YRO* M23:1 ARM 17 November 1743.

<sup>97</sup> Burney, *A General History*, Vol II, p. 1008. Charles Burney refers to a bassoonist of this name living in London in 1744.

<sup>98</sup> *YC* 31 December 1751.

lapsed; a notice in the *York Courant* in 1749 remarked that ‘we hear that the Musick Assembly which formerly us’d to be held at the George in Coney-street, will be reviv’d this winter’.<sup>99</sup> The re-opening in 1749 was, according to the *Courant*, well-attended:

there appear’d as great a Number of Gentlemen as ever was known and, as it is begun on the usual Footing, there is no doubt of its meeting with great Encouragement.<sup>100</sup>

No further references survive to the club, however, suggesting that the *Courant*’s optimism was misplaced.

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<sup>99</sup> *YC* 21 November 1749.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 December 1749.

# 4

## CONSOLIDATION

### **I: York – resident musicians and the subscription series**

The new winter subscription series that began in York in January 1743 was apparently well-supported;<sup>1</sup> the series continued throughout the 1740s on the same terms (half a guinea for a full subscription).<sup>2</sup> With the departure of Hebden and most of the Italians, room was left for an extensive change in personnel. Audiences were apparently no less anxious than before for international performers but the new Directors limited their expenditure to one. In 1743 and 1744, the leader was apparently Antonio Pizzolato (a Ventian) who later had the misfortune to be attacked by pirates;<sup>3</sup> after that, the Directors

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<sup>1</sup> YC 18 January 1743.

<sup>2</sup> Subscribers could also take out a half subscription (confusingly known as a Quarter) or pay in two instalments. There was no financial advantage or disadvantage to either method of payment.

<sup>3</sup> YC 3 June 1746. See E.J. Chevall, *Music Societies and Musical Life in Old Formation Cathedral Cities, 1700-60*, PhD dissertation, King's College, London, 1993, p. 95.





Plate 7: James Nares (engraving by W. Ward).

hired the German violinist, Knerler, described later by Charles Burney in complimentary if vague terms:

BALTSAR, of Lubec ... was the first great violinist we had ever heard in England during the last century; and KNERLER, about the middle of this, surprised us nearly as much.<sup>4</sup>

Knerler was certainly established in York by 1746; he held no fewer than three benefits in the city in that year, in February, April and December.<sup>5</sup> During the summer, he travelled through the North, holding a benefit in Doncaster Race Week in June<sup>6</sup> and concerts in Durham (25 August) and Newcastle (8 September);<sup>7</sup> he described himself as 'the first Violin of the Concert at York (Who has had the Honour to perform, with some Applause, before most of the Princes in Europe)'.<sup>8</sup> He may have been on his way to Edinburgh, or on his way back, when he gave the Newcastle and Durham concerts; he was certainly *en route* to Scotland the following year when he gave another concert in Newcastle.<sup>9</sup> His stay in the area was short-lived; he seems to have severed the connection in mid-1747 and his place was taken by an old favourite, Cattani, who returned to the series for a further two years, probably as leader.<sup>10</sup> Also associated with the concerts at this period was a Mr. Zuckert, described as a flute player, who held benefits in 1745 and 1746.<sup>11</sup> Zuckert had, like Cattani, been associated with the earlier series, playing under Hebden's direction in 1741 and 1742; in these concerts however, he had played the sackbut.<sup>12</sup> Zuckert's benefit in 1746 included vocal parts by the former favourite of London audiences, the Durham singing man, Thomas Mountier.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Burney, *A General History*, Vol. II, p.461.

<sup>5</sup> YC 18 February, 8 April, 2 December 1746.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 27 May 1746.

<sup>7</sup> NC 9-16 August 1746.

<sup>8</sup> Idem.

<sup>9</sup> NJ 30 May 1747.

<sup>10</sup> YC 16 February 1748, 17 January 1749.

<sup>11</sup> Zuckert may have been a connection of John Frederick Zuckert, the well known double-bass player who played frequently at the Three Choirs Festivals in the 1760s.

<sup>12</sup> YC 24 February 1741, 9 February 1742.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 25 February 1746.

From the last years of the 1740s, the York subscription series came more and more into the hands of musicians resident in the city. Cattani was succeeded as leader by Miles Coyle. Coyle's origins are unknown although he was clearly not a local man; the advertisement for the winter series in 1749 remarked that 'he has never before perform'd in the north'.<sup>14</sup> Once established in York, however, he seems to have settled there and remained leader of the subscription series (and almost all other concerts) until 1776.<sup>15</sup> A second musician, Thomas Perkins may have come to the city from London. Perkins was principally a dancing master who 'was educated five years under Mr. Nichols, a very eminent Dancing-Master in London',<sup>16</sup> but he was so closely associated with the subscription series that for several years he held one of the three spring benefits. Although the oboe was his main instrument, he also played the flute and the 'Vox Humana'.<sup>17</sup>

Perkins held his dancing school in a room on Petergate<sup>18</sup> and from early 1749 also took on the management of the Fountain Coffee House in the same street.<sup>19</sup> He may have allowed his activities as dancing master to lapse; when he became a freeman of the city in 1748/9, it was in his capacity as 'aledraper'.<sup>20</sup> In July 1753 he moved 'to the old Coffee-house, known by the Name of PHIL's COFFEE-HOUSE, at the Minster Gates',<sup>21</sup> but this was a mistake – within a year and a half he was bankrupt and in prison.<sup>22</sup> His fellow musicians held a benefit for his wife and numerous children and may have raised sufficient money to secure his release.<sup>23</sup> Free again, he attempted to support himself by holding benefits (accompanied by one of his young sons, also an oboist) in York,

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<sup>14</sup> YC 3 Octobc. 1749.

<sup>15</sup> Coyle may have retired at this time. See Chapter 11.

<sup>16</sup> YC 30 December 1746.

<sup>17</sup> YC 6 September 1748.

<sup>18</sup> Idem.

<sup>19</sup> YC 7 February 1749.

<sup>20</sup> J. Malden, *Register of York Freemen 1680-1986* (York: for the author, 1989).

<sup>21</sup> YC 10 July 1753.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 24 December 1754.

<sup>23</sup> Idem.

Durham, Leeds, and possibly elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> He performed at concerts in the area until December 1758 but his later movements are not known.<sup>25</sup>

Another local performer making his debut in York concerts in the early 1750s was one of the Minster songmen, Thomas Haxby, later to be better known as a musical instrument maker. Haxby came from a family of flaxdressers,<sup>26</sup> and in 1750 at the age of twenty-one was appointed a probationer songman at the Minster as successor to the recently deceased Thomas Ellway; at the same time he took over Ellway's job as parish clerk of St Michael le Belfrey.<sup>27</sup> Haxby sang at one of Perkins's benefits in 1754 (performing one part of a duet from *Acis and Galatea*),<sup>28</sup> and, like Perkins and Miles Coyle, performed several times in Leeds concerts – notably at benefits there in 1757 and 1758 for the organist of the parish church, Mr. Crompton.<sup>29</sup> By this time, he had also opened a music shop in Blake Street, not far from the Assembly Rooms – the first shop in the North-East dedicated entirely to the sale of musical goods. Behind the scenes, he began to manufacture the keyboard instruments for which he later became famous.<sup>30</sup>

Haxby's fellow soloist in the vocal duet performed at Perkins's benefit in 1754 was the Minster organist, James Nares.<sup>31</sup> Nares was becoming increasingly active in commercial music-making in York, although it is difficult to assess the exact extent of his participation. He is occasionally mentioned as a keyboard soloist, appearing for instance at Perkins's benefit in February 1749 to play an organ concerto by Felton.<sup>32</sup> He was probably the regular continuo player in the subscription series and also sang in

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<sup>24</sup> YC 17 February 1756; NI 5 May 1756; Emily Hargrave, 'Musical Leeds in the Eighteenth Century', *Thoresby Society Publications*, Vol. XXVIII (Leeds, 1928), pp. 324-5.

<sup>25</sup> Idem.

<sup>26</sup> David Haxby and John Malden, 'Thomas Haxby of York (1729-1796) – an extraordinary musician and musical instrument-maker', *York Historian* (1978), pp. 43-55. See p. 43 for a brief account of Haxby's family background.

<sup>27</sup> YML H9/1 Chapter Acts 1747-56, 25 January 1750.

<sup>28</sup> YC 5 February 1754.

<sup>29</sup> Hargrave, p. 324-5.

<sup>30</sup> For further details, see Chapter 7.

<sup>31</sup> Nares had recently taken over the post of organist at St Michael le Belfrey after the death of Charles Pick [BI PR Y/MB Vestry Minutes of St. Michael le Belfrey, York, 26 March 1749].

<sup>32</sup> YC 7 February 1749.

concerts on a relatively frequent basis, often in duets with a child known only as ‘the Boy’ – probably one of the choristers at the Minster.<sup>33</sup> Nares did not hold a benefit concert in York until 1749 but thereafter held one every spring.<sup>34</sup> He was composing throughout this period, producing, amongst other works, *Eight Setts of Lessons* (1747) and a number of anthems for church use.<sup>35</sup> Eventually he came to the notice of his former associates at the Chapel Royal and in early 1756 he resigned from the Minster post to take up an appointment to the Chapel, lingering in York only long enough to hold his spring benefit.<sup>36</sup>

From around 1750, the musical year in York settled into a regular pattern with the three benefit concerts associated with the subscription series in late January and early February. Coyle’s benefit was generally followed at weekly intervals by a concert for Nares and another for Perkins,<sup>37</sup> with, two or three weeks later, a concert for the benefit of the Musick Assembly itself.<sup>38</sup> A varying number of morning concerts in Race Week in July or August was followed less than two months later by a winter subscription series of 21 concerts, stretching from mid-October until April or very early May. No programmes survive for Race Week or subscription concerts, but advertisements for the spring benefits frequently printed proposed programmes, the first surviving complete programmes for any concerts in the North-East. Twelve programmes dating from 1751-1756 remain, for benefits held by Coyle (5 programmes), Perkins (5), and Nares (2), and a concert in April 1754 put on by the visiting French Horn virtuoso, Mr. Charles.<sup>39</sup> (Ex. 4.1 and Appendix 1)

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<sup>33</sup> YC 21 January 1752. A reference to the boy as Jacky Camidge suggests that he can be identified with John Camidge, Nares’s successor as Minster organist [YC 19 February 1751].

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 14 February 1751.

<sup>35</sup> Watkins Shaw, ‘Nares’, *Grove*, 13, pp. 38-9.

<sup>36</sup> YC 30 March 1756.

<sup>37</sup> e.g. YC 15 January, 29 January, 19 February 1751.

<sup>38</sup> e.g. YC 12 March 1751.

<sup>39</sup> YC 16 April 1754.

#### Ex. 4.1: Benefit for Miles Coyle, 26 January 1753<sup>40</sup>

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ACT I	
Overture in Rosamond	Arne
Song	
Duet for two violins	
Oboe Concerto	Giardini
ACT II	
Overture	
Duet for harpsichord and violin	Giardini
Song	
First concerto	Scarlatti

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These benefits were all in two acts, usually with four items in each (a fifth item might be added to one act) but there seems to have been no set pattern for the arrangement of items within the acts. Each generally began with a full orchestral piece, often an overture although not invariably; Nares began the second half of his 1756 concert, for instance, with an organ concerto.<sup>41</sup> Vocal items could appear at any point in the programme and the final item might as easily be a song or vocal duet as the full orchestral piece more usual in later concerts.<sup>42</sup> In general, vocal items were much less common than instrumental items and may reflect the absence of one leading vocal soloist. Charles's concert had no vocal items at all.<sup>43</sup> By far the most popular instrumental genre was the concerto, with works for oboe (Perkins), violin (Coyle) and organ (Nares) inevitably predominating. Given the habit of eighteenth-century instrumentalists of composing most of their own solos, York audiences inevitably heard a very high proportion of music by local composers; of the non-local composers whose works are known to have been played, Handel was by far the most popular – his

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<sup>40</sup> YC 23 January 1753.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 28 January 1752.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 9 February 1754, 15 February 1754.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 16 April 1754.

overtures were played in almost every concert. Other popular composers were Martini (that is, Sammartini), Geminiani and Boyce.

All this activity disguises the fact that the concert series at this period was still not on a sound financial footing. At the end of the 1744-5 season, a meeting of the Directors was called 'to consider whether the concerts can be continued the next Season'.<sup>44</sup> The series did go ahead – some of the problems may have been associated with the turmoil caused by the Jacobite rebellion – but difficulties were still evident in 1748 when a similar meeting was called 'to consider of Methods for carrying on the Concert'.<sup>45</sup> That year the series began on 11 October<sup>46</sup> but after only three concerts the Directors wrote to the *York Courant* to advise readers that:

according to the low State of their Stock, it will be utterly impossible for them to continue the Concert any longer than the present Season, unless they are favour'd with a much larger Subscription this first Quarter than at present they seem likely to be; ... it is evident ... that, unless the first Quarter is much better than it hath been of late, both the principal Stock and annual Income together, will not be sufficient to support the Expence of the present Concert, much less of one that is better which many People seem desirous of.<sup>47</sup>

Early in 1749, a writer to the *Courant* (signing himself *Spectator*) suggested that poor attendance at the concerts was at least in part owing to the setting up of a Tradesman's Assembly which he considered a deliberate 'Insult to the Gentry, who come to spend their money amongst us';<sup>48</sup> the author's intent, however, was to criticise the unhealthy independence of the trademen rather than to throw light on the problems of the subscription concert. The series limped on into another year with Miles Coyle making

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<sup>44</sup> YC 12 March 1745.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 22 March 1748.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 4 October 1748.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 1 November 1748.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 17 January 1749.

his first appearance as leader in October 1749,<sup>49</sup> but was no more profitable than before. In December the Directors increased the price of subscription to the second Quarter (that is, the second half of the series) from 5s. to 7s. 6d., stating that 'the Expence of the last Quarter's concert [had] exceeded the Subscription near Forty Pounds'.<sup>50</sup>

It may be that the benefits for the Music Assembly – the first of which was held only three months after this increase<sup>51</sup> – were a response to the Assembly's financial situation and a way of trying to recoup some of the losses of the previous season. In addition to this, Race Week concerts were also held for the benefit of the Musick Assembly from around this period – initially one concert was held with an additional benefit for the leader and another for the vocal soloist. From 1754, two concerts for the benefit of the Musick Assembly were put on.<sup>52</sup> Together with the increased price of the subscription, these benefits seem to have resolved the series' financial problems for the next decade or more.

The Race Week concerts were clearly showpieces intended to attract the many visitors to the city at that time and were the last refuge of the ambitious plans of the Musick Assembly Directors. No longer able to hire the foremost Italian performers for the subscription concerts, they settled for employing eminent players for Race Week. In 1751, they hired the Italian violinist, Felice Giardini, less than a year after his arrival in the country.<sup>53</sup> Giardini had made a great impression from his first performance; Charles Burney remarked that at his first London performance in 1751:

when Giardini played a solo of Martini of Milan's composition, the applause was so long and loud, that I never remember to have heard such hearty and unequivocal marks of approbation at any other musical performance whatever.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> YC 3 October 1749.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 26 December 1749.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 13 March 1750.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 20 August 1754.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 20 August 1751.

<sup>54</sup> Burney, *A General History*, Vol. II, pp. 849-50. For Giardini's career see S. McVeigh, 'A Violinist in late eighteenth-century London', *ML*, Vol. 64, Nos. 3-4, July-October 1983, pp. 162-172.



Giardini's success in London was echoed in York; his annual visits there continued until at least 1777<sup>55</sup> (with two exceptions caused by illness). In the early 1750s, he came to York from similar Race Week engagements in Newcastle and Durham,<sup>56</sup> and he is also known to have played at concerts in Beverley (1769), Leicester (1774), and Leeds (1779).<sup>57</sup> The North-East seems to have been Giardini's regular resort for at least part of every summer throughout his stay in England.<sup>58</sup> He was joined every year in the Race Week concerts by a single Italian singer, usually female: Galli (1751), Frasi (1753, 1754), and his wife, Signora Vestris (1753).<sup>59</sup>

## II: Avison and visitors to Newcastle

In Newcastle, the subscription series seems to have run smoothly during the 1730s and 1740s. Advertisements appeared before the beginning of the series in September or October every year and the price and conditions of tickets did not vary. In respect of other matters, such as repertoire and performers, these advertisements are singularly uninformative – subscribers were apparently expected to know what to expect.

During these years, Avison was consolidating his position in Newcastle and simultaneously establishing a calendar of events that was to remain the basic pattern of the musical year in the city for much of the century. In the summer between the first and second subscription series, he held a benefit concert in Assize Week;<sup>60</sup> this concert (usually held in August) was the highlight of summer music-making together with a concert held on the Wednesday of Race Week, generally a month or so earlier –

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<sup>55</sup> YC 12 August 1777.

<sup>56</sup> He was well acquainted with Charles Avison, with whom he later collaborated to produce the oratorio *Ruth* [McVeigh, 'Giardini', p. 165].

<sup>57</sup> YC 29 August 1769; YCh 30 September 1774; YC 30 March 1779.

<sup>58</sup> He left England in 1784.

<sup>59</sup> YC 20 August 1751, 11 August 1752, 20 August 1754, 21 August 1753.

<sup>60</sup> NC 7 August 1736.

*Ch. Avison*

A N

E S S A Y

O N

MUSICAL EXPRESSION.

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By CHARLES AVISON,  
*Organist in NEWCASTLE.*

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*Sò ben, ch'era Mestier da Virtuosi  
La Musica una Volta; e l'imparavano,  
Tra gl'huomini i più grandi, ei più famosi.  
Sò che Davide, e Socrate cantavano;  
E che de l'Arcade, il Grèco, e lo Spartano,  
D'altra Scienza al par la celebravano..  
Sò, che fù di Miracoli feconda,  
E che sapea ritor l'Anima à Lete,  
Benche fussero quasi in su la Sponda.*

SALVAT. ROSA. Sat: I.

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L O N D O N ::

Printed for C. DAVIS, opposite Gray's-Inn-Gate,  
in Holborn. MDCCLII.

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Plate 8: Title page of first edition of the *Essay on Musical Expression*.

although Avison's name is not specifically associated with these latter concerts in the 1730s, he was certainly the organiser from 1742.<sup>61</sup> Even in the confused circumstances of mid- to late- 1745, when the Jacobite rebels passed close to the city, these summer concerts were advertised as usual in early June and mid-August, and there is no evidence to suggest that they were cancelled.<sup>62</sup> The start of the subscription series, however, was advertised rather later than usual, at the end of October rather than at the beginning.<sup>63</sup> It is possible that attendance at this series, particularly at the earlier concerts, may have been adversely affected by the political uncertainty, as in March 1746 – immediately after the end of the series – Avison advertised a further six-concert subscription series at half the usual price, that is five shillings.<sup>64</sup> This mini-series, arranged at short notice, is the only one of its kind that Avison ever held and may represent an attempt to recoup losses made in the earlier series.

Concert-promotion formed only a small part of his activities in Newcastle. In October 1736, Thomas Powell, the organist of St. Nicholas's Church, died and Avison was elected to succeed him, exchanging a £20 salary at St. John's for £40 at St. Nicholas.<sup>65</sup> Avison felt sufficiently secure to marry, in January 1737.<sup>66</sup> In the late 1740s, he further consolidated his financial position by taking on the St. John's post again; his successor in that position, James Clark (a saddler), died in 1743,<sup>67</sup> and was probably not replaced – a Corporation minute of October 1748 referred to the organ at St. John's as 'long useless'.<sup>68</sup> Avison offered to pay almost two thirds of the cost of repairs on condition that he should be appointed organist, promising to supply 'a

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<sup>61</sup> NC 31 July-7 August 1742..

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 1-8 June, 3-10 August 1745.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 19-26 October 1745.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 22 February-1 March 1746.

<sup>65</sup> Co. Co. 20 October 1736. He did not receive the increase immediately, as the Corporation set aside some of the salary to pay Powell's funeral expenses and debts.

<sup>66</sup> Marriage Registers of All Saints' Church, Newcastle, 15 January 1736/7.

<sup>67</sup> TAWS Co. Co. 20 October 1736; NC 9-16 April 1743. Clark was the last known eighteenth-century organist in Newcastle who was not a professional musician.

<sup>68</sup> TAWS Co. Co. 10 October 1748.

sufficient deputy'.<sup>69</sup> The offer was accepted; Avison presumably paid his deputy a proportion of the salary and kept the rest.

Much of Avison's time was inevitably spent teaching; he generally taught in his own house, carefully separating young ladies whom he instructed on the harpsichord in the mornings, and young gentlemen whom he taught violin and German flute in the afternoons. His charges were half a guinea per month (for eight lessons) with a guinea entrance fee.<sup>70</sup> A reference in his advertisement to his teaching 'in Newcastle' suggests that, like Hesletine, he may also have taught outside the city. In addition, he found time to do a great deal of writing, of both music and prose. His earliest known music dates from around 1737 – he produced his best-known concertos (based on Scarlatti's works) in 1744. These works show clear signs of the players for whom he was composing – the mixture of professional and amateur players in his band – in their relatively simple ripieno parts and more complex solo portions.<sup>71</sup> At the same time he was working out his own philosophical ideas on music in prose, publishing the finished book in April 1752 as *An Essay on Musical Expression*.<sup>72</sup>

The general layout of the book suggests that Avison may have written it at the instigation, or at least with the encouragement, of his amateur performers. It is an intensely practical book; two of its three sections deal with advice to the composer (Section 2) and to the performer (Section 3). Avison anticipated a lay audience, writing an introduction that defined such terms as melody, harmony, modulation, cadence and score. His educational intention was made explicit in the first paragraph:

as the public Inclination for Music seems every Day advancing,  
it may not be amiss ... to offer a few Observations on that  
delightful Art; Such Observations ... as may be chiefly  
applicable to the present Times; such as may tend to correct any

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<sup>69</sup> TAWS Co. Co. 10 October 1748.

<sup>70</sup> NC 10-17 November 1750.

<sup>71</sup> See Appendix 2 for a full list of Avison's compositions.

<sup>72</sup> Charles Avison, *An Essay on Musical Expression* (London: C. Davies, 1752).

He later wrote that he had originally had the intention of ‘writing Directions to Performers only’ but could not resist the temptation of writing for the composer too.<sup>74</sup>

In the first section, he discussed the general appeal of music, attributing its greatest pleasure to its ability to quieten ugly passions, to ‘pour in upon the Mind, a silent and serene Joy’,<sup>75</sup> and stressing the importance of Musical Expression which, he says, increased this beneficial effect. It is this concept to which the rest of the book is dedicated, after a digression to compare the aural art of music to the visual art of painting which he believed will be more familiar to most readers.

In the second section of the book, he addressed the composer, insisting that melody, harmony and expression must be combined in a perfect balance to make a truly good piece of music. He condemned what he called ‘the present fashionable Extreme’ of emphasising melody to the detriment of harmony which he felt led to mere virtuosity – ‘that Deluge of unbounded *Extravaganzi*, which the unskilled call Invention, and which are merely calculated to show an Execution without either Propriety or Grace’.<sup>76</sup> He commented that ‘the Generality of our musical Virtuosi are too easily led by the Opinions of such Masters; and where there is no real Discernment, Prejudice and Affection will soon assume the Place of Reason’.<sup>77</sup> These remarks echo comments made by his supporters in the dispute with the Swiss violinist; the violinist was described as ‘a certain nimble-finger’d Swiss [who] upon his receiving every Night an extravagant Demand for his Dexterity that Way, [imagin’d] himself a Person of so much

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<sup>73</sup> Charles Avison, *An Essay on Musical Expression* (London: C. Davies, 1752), p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Mr. Avison’s Reply to the Author of Remarks on the Essay on Musical Expression, In a Letter from Mr. Avison to his Friend in London’, in Avison, *Essay*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: C. Davies, 1753), p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Avison, *Essay*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8.

Consequence'.<sup>78</sup> Avison then proceeded to name names, listing a variety of composers from Palestrina to Vivaldi, Scarlatti and Rameau to Handel, in support of his arguments.<sup>79</sup> In passing, he condemned 'summer Entertainments' (by which he meant music at gardens such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh which, he said, 'cannot possibly prove of any Advantage to Music'),<sup>80</sup> and much of contemporary church music. He condemned the organist who:

is too often so fond of his own Conceits; that with his absurd Graces, and tedious and ill connected Interludes, he misleads or confounds his Congregation, instead of being the rational Guide and Director of the whole.<sup>81</sup>

These remarks may have been directed at Newcastle's only other organist, Solomon Strolger of All Saints; reference was made at Strolger's death to his 'unmeaning rants from the Organ loft'.<sup>82</sup>

The final section – 'On Musical Expression, *as it relates to the PERFORMER*' – was clearly drawn from Avison's own experiences with his Newcastle band. Speaking first generally, he condemned 'all Imitations of *Flageolets, Horns, Bagpipes, &c.* On the Violin, a kind of low Device, calculated merely to amaze'.<sup>83</sup> He accused Vivaldi for falling into this trap in the *Four Seasons* and his mention of 'the singing of a Cuckoo, and the cackling of a Hen [which] have ... been often introduced into musical Performances' suggests that he might have known of the Cuckoo Solo played by Mr. Love snr. Avison also described double-stops as 'one of the Abuses'<sup>84</sup> on the grounds that 'they only deaden the Tone, spoil the Expression, and obstruct the Execution ... and bring down *one good* Instrument to the State of *two indifferent* ones'. His ideal band, according to this final section of the *Essay*, would consist of six first violins, four

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<sup>78</sup> NC 10 April 1736.

<sup>79</sup> Avison, *Essay*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, pp. 42-53.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-8.

<sup>82</sup> NC 13 January 1781.

<sup>83</sup> Avison, *Essay*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, pp. 90-1.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

seconds, four basses (violas and cellos), two double-basses and a harpsichord. Fewer instruments (provided the balance be preserved) would, he said, answer as well. How closely Avison's own band matched this ideal is not clear, but his remark that more players 'would *probably*' [my italics] destroy the balance between ripieno and solo, suggests that he had little or no experience of a larger band. He advocated that wind instruments should be used only in moderation and should be avoided in concertos for violins (concerti grossi) except perhaps for the use of an expertly played bassoon. He insisted that the four string principals should be excellent players of equal merit, (lamenting that this rule was not usually applied to the viola principal) and that the harpsichord should be notable for its restraint.<sup>85</sup>

Personal experience no doubt influenced several elements of his advice to performers. Those with small parts should not be despondent:

Nor let any lover of Music be concerned if there is but little for him to execute, since he will thence have some Leisure for the Pleasure of Hearing.<sup>86</sup>

He warned about the excessive use of ornaments, too-prominent inner parts that dominated solo instruments and octave transpositions on the part of players 'merely from a Desire of being distinguished, and that the Audience may admire their Execution'.<sup>87</sup> Another habit of which he disapproved was the practice of performers:

the Moment a Piece is ended, [running] over their Instrument, forgetting that Order, like Silence under Arms in the military Discipline, should also be observed in the Discipline of Music.<sup>88</sup>

The latter two admonitions read very much as if Avison was writing from personal experience and even more heartfelt was almost the last thought of the *Essay*. Referring to the advantage that a book has over a musical work, in being able to be consulted frequently, he wrote:

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<sup>85</sup> Avison, *Essay*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, pp. 116-7.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118-9.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>88</sup> *Idem.*

How often does the Fate of a Concerto depend on the random Execution of a Set of Performers who have never previously considered the work, examined the Connection of its Parts or studied the Intention of the whole.<sup>89</sup>

It may be that concerts in Newcastle were not always of the highest quality as far as execution was concerned.

Avison's book attracted immediate attention and prompted a swift and astringent reply from William Hayes of Oxford, ostensibly taking issue with some of Avison's remarks on the music of the ancients in the first section of the *Essay* but also attacking his views more generally.<sup>90</sup> Avison, in a reply published at the beginning of 1753, called Hayes a 'virulent, though, I flatter myself, not formidable Antagonist',<sup>91</sup> and proceeded to be far more insulting than his attacker. He wrote that the pamphlet had showed the writer to be 'a vain, disappointed, snarling Doctor of the Science',<sup>92</sup> making a 'ridiculous charge'.<sup>93</sup> He criticised his attacker's sources,<sup>94</sup> told him he had misunderstood the purpose of the *Essay* ('to improve the Manner, not teach the Mechanism')<sup>95</sup> and said bluntly that 'I see no Reason why a critical Enquirer into the Merits of my Essay, should think it his Business first to examine the Merits of my musical Compositions'.<sup>96</sup> He accused the author of having a personal grudge – if the *Essay* had been published anonymously, Avison said, there would have been no offence.<sup>97</sup>

Avison moved on to address specific points raised by his antagonist in a more restrained manner, although he could not hold back entirely from ridicule, berating the

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<sup>89</sup> Avison, *Essay*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, p. 137.

<sup>90</sup> 'A Letter to the Author, concerning the Music of the Ancients, and some Passages in Classic Writers, relating to that Subject' in Avison, *Essay*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

<sup>91</sup> Avison, 'Reply', in *Essay*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p.1.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5-6.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>96</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>97</sup> Avison, 'Reply', pp. 8-7.



writer for railing against what was obviously a misprint,<sup>98</sup> for lack of musical knowledge, and for calling Handel English. To conclude, he sets the record straight on his opinion of Handel, writing that:

Mr. HANDEL is to Music, what his own DRYDEN was in Poetry; nervous, exalted, and harmonious; but voluminous, and, consequently, not always correct. Their Abilities equal to every thing; their Execution frequently inferior. Born with Genius capable of *soaring the boldest Flights*; they have sometimes, to suit the vitiated Taste of the Age they lived in, *descended to the lowest*. Yet, as both their Excellencies are infinitely more numerous than their Deficiencies, so both their Characters will devolve to latest Posterity, not as Models of Perfection, yet glorious Examples of those amazing Powers that actuate the human Soul.<sup>99</sup>

Avison's unrestrained and uninhibited attack on his antagonist recalls in certain respects his supporters' demolition of the Swiss violinist when similar language and ridicule was used. Avison, as later events were to show again, was never entirely comfortable with those he perceived as a threat and was frequently inclined to strike back. He or his supporters may have been implicated in hostility shown towards at least one visiting musician at this period. A number of visitors held benefits in the city in the 1740s. (Table 4.1, p. 80) Amongst these was the young Tomaso Pinto, visiting Newcastle in 1741 and described as 'a Youth of thirteen Years of Age, who will perform several Solo's on the Violin and German Flute'.<sup>100</sup> An unidentifiable violinist called Wright, who claimed to have just returned from Italy (1741), held a concert in August 1741; Wright played 'several Solo's upon the Violin, particularly Signior Tartin's famous Pastoral'.<sup>101</sup> The 'Band of Music belonging to his Majesty's regiments of Old Buffs' (who may have been quartered locally) played on the anniversary of the King's

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<sup>98</sup> Avison, 'Reply', pp. 26-7.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>100</sup> NC 18-25 April 1741. The advertisement's estimate of Pinto's age is at odds with his entry in *Grove* which states his date of birth to have been 1714; if correct, this would make Pinto 27 years old at the time of his visit to Newcastle.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 15-22 August 1741.

Coronation at the Assembly Rooms on 11 October 1750.<sup>102</sup> Another concert, in late 1747, was held by Dr. and Mrs. Heighington;<sup>103</sup> Musgrave Heighington, a native of Durham, had been organist of Holy Trinity Hull for twenty-five years before moving to a church in Great Yarmouth. He had, however, just been dismissed from the latter post and seems to have been between appointments; he moved to Leicester in 1740.<sup>104</sup> Heighington was the first of a number of North-Eastern musicians with links to Hull; his successor, elected in 1720, was a William Avison who may have been a family connection – possibly a cousin – of Charles Avison. William's name appears as a subscriber to Charles's Op. 3 (1751).<sup>105</sup>

But the visitor who seems to have aroused antagonism was Mr. Parry, a Welsh harpist, who, having held benefits in York (January 1741) and Leeds (February 1741), moved on to Durham and then to Newcastle where he gave a concert on 2 April.<sup>106</sup> These concerts were not advertised in local papers but were briefly reported by the *Newcastle Journal*:

We hear that Mr. Parry, the Gentleman that plays upon the Harp, lately arrived from Bristol, has given general Satisfaction to those that have heard him, especially at Durham, and at the private Concert in this Town who, we are inform'd, is to perform in publick at the Assembly-Room in this Place next Thursday.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> NC 29 September-6 October 1750. Spencer Cowper had heard this band perform in Durham about a month previously; he wrote to his brother: 'I mention a Concert the French Horns and Hautboys of the Regt. Of Old Buffs had at our Assembly Room last Wednesday. One fellow imitated a flagelet with his violin, which he pretends to be entirely an invention of his own. I fancy the great mystery of it lyes in playing near the bridge'. Cowper, *Letters*, p. 129, 21 September 1750.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 7-14 November 1747.

<sup>104</sup> G.H.Smith, *Hull Organs*, pp. 8-9. Heighington eventually became organist of the English Episcopal Chapel in Dundee, where he died in 1764.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. pp. 9-10.

<sup>106</sup> NJ 28 March 1741.

<sup>107</sup> Idem.

**Table 4.1: Visitors to Newcastle in the 1740s**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Performer</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1741 2 April	Mr. Parry	‘We hear that Mr. Parry, the Gentleman who plays on the Harp, lately arriv’d from Bristol, has given general Satisfaction to those that have heard him.’ <b>NJ 28 March 1741</b>
4 May	Tomaso Pinto	‘the Benefit of TOMASO PINTO, a Youth of thirteen Years of Age, who will perform several Solo’s on the Violin and German Flute.’ <b>NC 18-25 April</b>
31 August	Mr. Wright	‘ <i>For the Benefit of Mr. Wright, (Lately from Italy)</i> ... consisting chiefly of new Pieces of the best Masters; with several Solo’s upon the Violin, particularly Signior Tartini’s famous Pastoral; Likewise several Pieces for two Violins.’ <b>NC 15-22 August</b>
17 October	Mr. Parry	‘I had the Pleasure of hearing Mr. Parry play both Italian and Scots Tunes to great Perfection on the Treble Harp.’ <b>NC 10-17 October</b>
1743 19 December	Mr. Paul	‘A Concert of Vocal and Instrumental MUSICK. The Vocal Parts to be performed by Gentlemen belonging to the Choir of Durham.’ <b>NJ 17 December 1743</b>
1746 8 September	Mr. Knerler	‘a Concert’ <b>NC 9-16 August 1746</b>
1747 3 June	Mr. Knerler	‘a Concert’ <b>NJ 30 May 1747</b>
20 November	Dr. and Mrs. Heighington	‘a CONCERT of Vocal and Instrumental MUSICK ... The Vocal Parts by Dr. Heighington and Mrs. Heighington.’ <b>NC 7-14 November 1747</b>
1750 11 October	His Majesty’s regiment of Old Buffs	‘Several Pieces will be play’d on Hautboys, French horns, a Bassoon, a Trumpet Concerto, a Solo upon the Violin, in Imitation of a Flagelet, Hautbois d’Amour, and other Instruments.’ <b>NC 29 September-6 October 1750</b>

Parry returned in October for two more concerts; these were the subject of a letter to the *Newcastle Courant*; a member of the audience wrote that he was:

much concerned, considering how admirably he [Mr. Parry] performs, to see so small a Company and still more to find that it was owing to the Opposition of some Persons who can't bear that a Stranger should meet with any Encouragement in Newcastle. As this Gentleman told me he designed to have another Entertainment ... on Monday next ... I thought myself obliged, in justice to his Merit and for the Satisfaction of those who have not as yet heard him play, to give this Public Notice, in full Confidence that they will be agreeably Entertained, whatever may have been insinuated to the Contrary.<sup>108</sup>

In the absence of any other supporting evidence, it is impossible to assess the degree to which these accusations were justified or the extent to which Avison may have been involved. It is clear however that he was already on bad terms with James Hesletine, organist of Durham Cathedral, a situation that was to have unexpected consequences in Durham's musical life.

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<sup>108</sup> NC 10-17 October 1741.

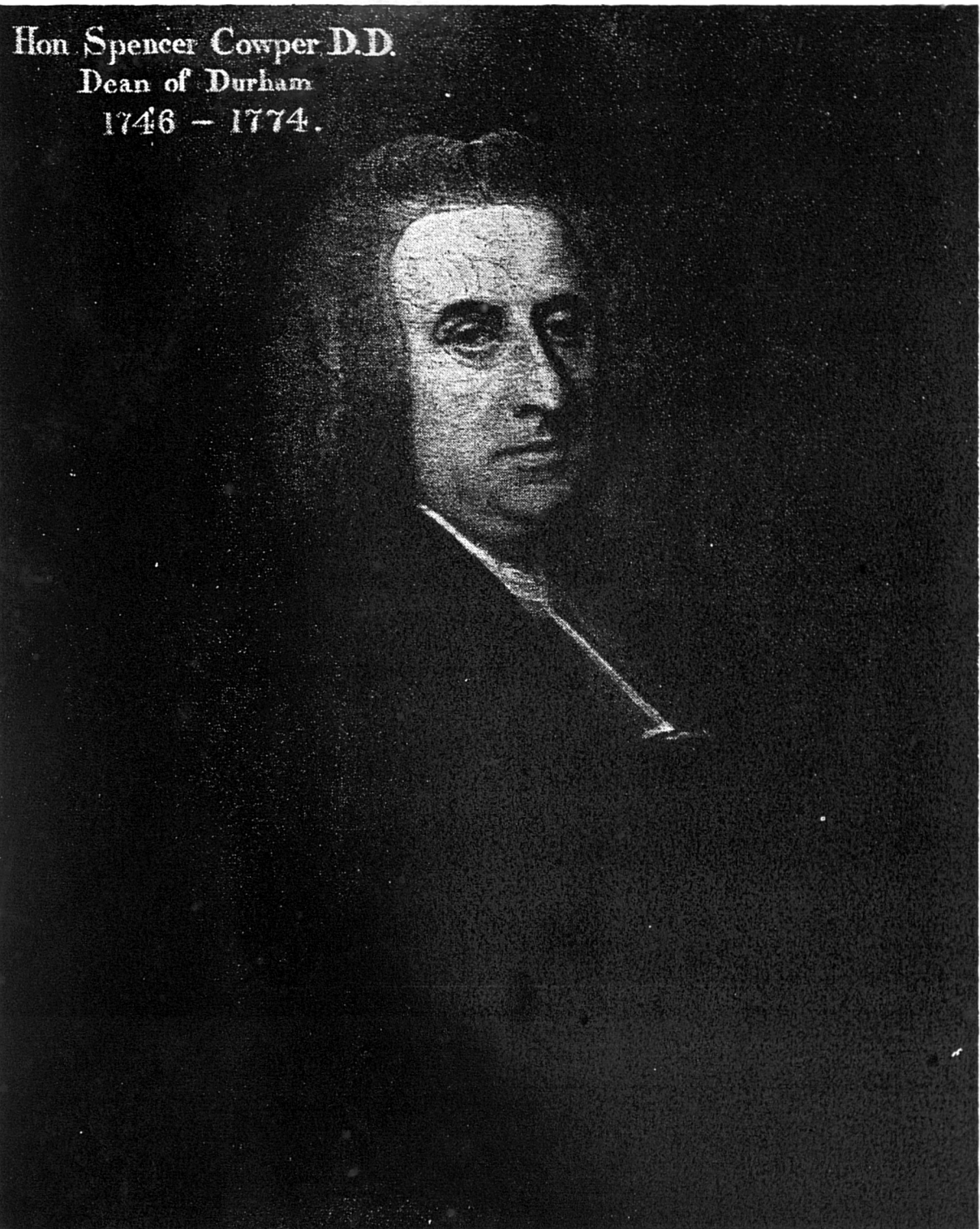


Plate 9: Spencer Cowper, Dean of Durham Cathedral.

# 5

## CO-OPERATION AND COMPETITION IN DURHAM

### I: The Choir Concert

The earliest known concert in Durham – Thomas Mountier’s 1755 benefit at the Grammar School – is at such a late date compared to concerts in Newcastle and York that it is tempting to believe that a great deal of earlier information has been lost. Likewise, although a winter subscription concert is not known in Durham until the 1740-1 season, the wording of the advertisement for the series suggests that this may not have been the first – there is no suggestion of novelty or newness and no explanation of ticket conditions. As in Newcastle, the series began in early October and cost half a guinea; no indication is given of the number of concerts, their frequency or the repertoire

performed.<sup>1</sup> Advertisements do not appear again until the 1748-9 and 1749-50 seasons but it is probable that the series ran continuously from 1740 onward.

The promoters of these early concerts are not named in the advertisements but personal papers of the then Dean of Durham Cathedral, Dr. Spencer Cowper, and of his friends, indicate that the concerts were organised by Cathedral personnel. A diary belonging to the Rev. G. W. Harris of Egglescliffe mentions a public concert in October 1748 at which Cowper's brother, Earl Cowper, played first violin;<sup>2</sup> this concert appears to have been one of the subscription series. (Harris also notes private concerts, held in the Deanery, in which Lord Cowper led a band including singing men and Hesletine the organist.<sup>3</sup>) A year later Cowper, in a letter to his brother, refers to the winter series as 'our concerts'.<sup>4</sup> A performance of Handel's *Alexander's Feast* a month later to celebrate St. Cecilia's Day was clearly put on by Cathedral personnel; the Dean remarked to his brother: 'Our News Paper's may have informed you of the noble manner our harmonious Band celebrated St. Cecilia'.<sup>5</sup> The advertisement for this concert offers admittance free to subscribers to the winter concerts suggesting that the two events were run by the same people.<sup>6</sup>

Cowper's comment on the St. Cecilia's Day concert was intended to be ironic – his letter suggests that the quality of music-making at these concerts was not always high. He was amused by newspaper reports that 'Alexander's Feast was better perform'd than at London';<sup>7</sup> the *Newcastle Courant* had said that it was 'allowed, by

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<sup>1</sup> NC 20 September 1740.

<sup>2</sup> Diary of G. W. Harris, 25 October 1745. All extracts from Harris's papers are quoted by courtesy of the Earl of Malmesbury.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 21 October 1745.

<sup>4</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 109, 28 September 1749.

<sup>5</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, pp. 117-8, 7 December 1745.

<sup>6</sup> NC 13-25 November 1749.

<sup>7</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, pp. 117-8, 7 December 1749.

several of the best Judges, to equal, if not exceed, the ... Performance of it in London'.<sup>8</sup>

Cowper commented:

It certainly was better than we could expect to have it here. Our ...Canons were of great service in the Chorus's, but all, except old Gregory, much above singing single songs, so we failed in them.<sup>9</sup>

Cowper's words make it clear that the Minor Canons of the Cathedral not only sang in the choir but also took part in concerts, despite sometimes limited abilities. Even some of the singing men were not of the best quality; Cowper refers to one as 'squeaking thro' his nose like a penny trumpet'.<sup>10</sup>

Harris too casts doubt on both the abilities of the performers and the quality of the music they played. In a letter dated October 1746, he wrote:

Last week I was at Durham, at one of their public concerts: – But the music wasn't chose at all to my taste, for under the notion of having variety, they had what seem'd to me but very indifferent. There was another concert at the Deanery, a private one, which went off more to my satisfaction.<sup>11</sup>

The private concert included Corelli and Geminiani; there is no reference to repertoire at the public concert.<sup>12</sup> In a letter written a fortnight earlier, Harris painted a black picture of the skill with which this music was played, displaying a condescending attitude to the Cathedral musicians:

I mention'd in my last what encouragement the cause of music has had here from my Lord Cowper's presence; but he is now gone back to London again, which is, indeed, an irreparable loss to the Concerts here, not so much for his own importance, though that's considerable, as for the direction he gave our rustic hands in the manner of their playing, excellent music of Handel and other great masters, being I assure you absolutely spoiled by them, by their now & then mistaking Adagio's for Allegro's, together with some few capital errors of that kind. – These my Lord did all he could to rectifie, & had really pretty good success

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<sup>8</sup> NC 13-25 November 1749.

<sup>9</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 117-8, 7 December 1745. Edward Gregory, a minor canon, was vicar of St. Margaret's in the city. His brother, Abraham, was also a vicar and sang in the choir and in concerts.

<sup>10</sup> *Letters*, p. 161, 10 December 1752.

<sup>11</sup> Letter of G. W. Harris to Elizabeth Harris, 28 October 1748

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*.



at last; though now he is gone, 'tis to be feared our musicians here will follow their natural bias to what is wrong, & relapse into their former errors.<sup>13</sup>

Earl Cowper also had a hand in improving the quality of the instruments used by the Cathedral Band. He was applied to by his brother for a violin to be used by the leader of the band, Cornforth Gelson. Gelson, a County Durham man, had been a chorister in the choir for six years<sup>14</sup> and had then spent a further four years as a wait in Newcastle<sup>15</sup> before returning to the Cathedral as a singing man in late 1751.<sup>16</sup> The Dean wrote that he 'plays very tolerably but has a wretched Instrument ... and not enough beforehand in the world to afford himself a better'.<sup>17</sup> Instead of sending a relatively cheap modern instrument as requested by his brother, the Earl sent a Cremonese violin nicknamed the *Cardinal*. It did not entirely solve the band's problems; the Dean wrote:

Y<sup>r</sup> Cremona has improved our Concert very much, tho' one of poor Gelson's failings is, and I think his chief, that he does not draw a good tone from his fiddle, that even the Cardinal is not shown to his advantage.<sup>18</sup>

The comments of Harris and Cowper on the quality of Durham music-making carry a great deal of weight as they were both knowledgeable concert-goers. Harris's diary for the period between 17 February and 20 April 1749, when he was staying in London, records at least twelve occasions on which he went to performances or rehearsals of oratorios (on one occasion with Spencer Cowper). Harris also enjoyed the theatre and opera and visited Cowper at his house in Hertford where the Dean keenly supported the local subscription series.<sup>19</sup> Cowper himself attended concerts at every opportunity, writing from Bath in praise of Chilcot (the organist there)<sup>20</sup> and the Concert

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<sup>13</sup> Letter to Elizabeth Harris, 19 November 1748.

<sup>14</sup> CA, TA, 1738/9-1746, passim.

<sup>15</sup> TAWS, Co. Co. 19 January 1747, 19 December 1751.

<sup>16</sup> CA, Treasurer's Accounts, 1751-2.

<sup>17</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 157, 3 November 1752.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161, 10 December 1752.

<sup>19</sup> Diary of G.W. Harris, 5 July 1757.

<sup>20</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 42, 3 April 1745.

Breakfasts in the city;<sup>21</sup> he was also a fervent admirer of the castrato, Senesino.<sup>22</sup> He joked to his brother that he had gone to a Durham concert after returning from a visit to London 'for fear they sh'd think my Ears grown too nice',<sup>23</sup> and later bemoaned the quality of Durham singers after 'my better Entertainment of last year'.<sup>24</sup>

Despite his derogatory comments Cowper approved of at least some of the Cathedral musical personnel. In late 1753, he commented that:

My Choir has just been improved by the arrival of one of the best Singers in that Way I ever heard ... I had him from Winchester, and to add to his Perfections, he is a very decent Violino for our Concert.<sup>25</sup>

This was Jasper Clark, sworn in a fortnight earlier.<sup>26</sup> Clark sang in the Cathedral for the first time on 2 October 1753,<sup>27</sup> and shortly afterwards started to appear in public concerts.<sup>28</sup> He was also a composer, publishing a collection of songs in late 1759,<sup>29</sup> and supplemented his income by acting as a barber, shaving his fellow singing men.<sup>30</sup> The Dean and Chapter's regard for him was shown by his salary – £50 per annum – making him the highest paid singing man in the choir.<sup>31</sup> James Hesletine too was much in favour and at times travelled south with the prebendaries to provide music at their homes. In 1748, for instance, when the organ was under repair, Hesletine was given leave to accompany Sir John Dolben to his home, Finedon.

Agreed that M<sup>r</sup> Hesletine have leave to take three Choristers w<sup>th</sup> him to S<sup>r</sup> John Dolben, and that ... M<sup>r</sup> Montiere have leave to go w<sup>th</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Hesletine; he promiseing to return to his Duty before the Assizes.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cowper, *Letters* p. 43, 10 April 1745.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 77, 14 October 1746.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 104, 25 November 1748.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. pp. 109-110, 28 September 1749.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 169, 23 October 1753.

<sup>26</sup> CA DAB 6 October 1753.

<sup>27</sup> Diary of G.W. Harris, 2 October 1753.

<sup>28</sup> NC 25 May 1754.

<sup>29</sup> NJ 27 October-3 November 1759: 'Speedily will be published. A Collection of New Songs, compos'd by Mr. Jasper Clerk of Durham.'

<sup>30</sup> CA TA 1755-6 *et al.*

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., *passim*.

<sup>32</sup> CA DAB 26 March, 2 April 1748.

The references to the Assizes (Hesletine also agreed to return by that time)<sup>33</sup> must refer to religious duties; Durham had no known Assize Week concerts at this time and very few concerts outside the winter series. During the 1740s, only seven non-subscription concerts are known to have been held. (Table 5.1) Two of these were put on by outsiders: by Knerler in 1746<sup>34</sup> and by a Mr. Noell. Noell visited the area on a number of occasions, each time bringing with him a new novelty instrument; in Durham he offered:

an ENTERTAINMENT of MUSIC. CONSISTING OF Several good Pieces composed by Handel, Festing, Arne, &c. on the CYMBALO, the only instrument of its Kind in England, which has given the greatest Satisfaction to the best Judges in Musick.<sup>35</sup>

Noell moved on to perform the same programme in Sunderland.<sup>36</sup>

**Table 5.1: Non-subscription concerts in Durham in the 1740s.**

Date		Details
1745	17 July	For the Benefit of the Durham Performers (Race Week concert)
1746	11 July	For the Benefit of Mr. Garth (Race Week Concert)
	25 August	For the Benefit of Mr. Knerler 'the first violin of the Concert in York (Who has had the Honour to perform, with most of the Princes in Europe)' <b>NC 9-16 August 1746</b>
1747	14 July	For the Benefit of Mr. Garth (Race Week concert)
1748	22 July	For the Benefit of Mr. Garth (Race Week concert)
	8 October	For the Benefit of Mr. Noell 'an ENTERTAINMENT of MUSIC, CONSISTING of Several grand Pieces composed by Handel, Festing, Arne, &c. on the CIMBALO, the only Instrument of its Kind in England which has given the greatest Satisfaction to the best Judges in Musick.' <b>NC 24 September-1 October 1748</b>
1749	22 November	St Cecilia's Day Concert <i>Alexander's Feast</i>

<sup>33</sup> CA DAB 26 March 1748.

<sup>34</sup> NC 9-16 August 1746.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 24 September-1 October 1748. The Cymbalo is at present impossible to identify.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 1-8 October 1748.

Two further concerts were put on by Cathedral personnel – the St. Cecilia Day Concert of 1749 mentioned by Cowper, and a Race Week concert ‘for the benefit of the Durham performers’ in 1745.<sup>37</sup> This last concert seems to have established the practice of Race Week concerts in Durham but for the next few years the Cathedral personnel were apparently not involved in their organisation; from 1746 until 1748 the only recorded Race Week concerts were ‘for the benefit of Mr. Garth’.<sup>38</sup>

## **II: John Garth and the Gentlemen’s Subscription Concert**

John Garth was probably the son of William Garth of Harperley near Witton le Wear in County Durham and was baptised in the latter place in 1721.<sup>39</sup> His first known concert-giving activities date from 1745 when he held a concert in Race Week (September) in Stockton upon Tees.<sup>40</sup> The following year he held his first known concert in Durham, again during Race Week,<sup>41</sup> returning to Stockton for another Race Week concert in late August.<sup>42</sup> Garth may have been resident in Durham throughout most or all of this period, as the advertisements for Durham concerts refer to tickets being available at ‘Mr. Garth’s in Sadler-street’, while tickets for the Stockton concerts are available only from local inns and taverns. Garth’s connection with concert-giving in Stockton was brief; there is no record of a Race Week concert in the town after 1747<sup>43</sup> and it is not certain that Garth was involved with the concert in this last year. He did, however, maintain his connections with the town, playing the new organ at its dedication in 1759.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> NC 27 July- 3 August 1745.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 28 June –5 July 1746, 11-18 July 1747, 9-16 June 1748.

<sup>39</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Brian Crosby for this information.

<sup>40</sup> NC 27 July-3 August 1745.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 28 June-5 July 1746.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 12-19 July 1746.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 8-13 August 1747.

<sup>44</sup> DRO EP/Sto/38 Vestry Book 1762-1926, Stockton Parish Church.

Garth was apparently unconnected with the musical establishment at Durham Cathedral and is not known to have taken part in the choir's religious activities or their secular music-making. He was however probably organist of Sedgefield Church, south of the city;<sup>45</sup> the living of this church was in the gift of the Bishop of Durham who may also have influenced the choice of organist. In such a small city as Durham, he must certainly have been well-acquainted with the Cathedral musicians and from around 1750 was clearly in competition with them in a professional sense. In that year both the Cathedral band and Garth offered Race Week concerts (19 and 20 July respectively),<sup>46</sup> a situation that was repeated in 1751 on 18 and 19 July.<sup>47</sup> At both Race Week concerts, the Cathedral band offered songs and choruses from Handel; Garth offered simply 'a concert of musick'.

An entry in Harris's diary from late 1751 reinforces the suggestion of conflict between Garth and the Cathedral personnel. Moreover, Charles Avison was involved. Harris wrote:

Thursday October 31<sup>st</sup>. Dined at Dr. K[natchbull]'s<sup>48</sup> ... After dinner; ... Marcello Avison. Garth on the violoncello. – Hesletine refused to join with the Newcastle party in music.<sup>49</sup>

Harris's mention of 'the Newcastle party' makes it probable that he was referring to the man rather than merely his music when he mentioned Avison. This is the first indication of Garth's connection with Avison; it is not known how or where the two men met but later comments by Cowper indicate that Garth was a member of Avison's concert band in Newcastle.<sup>50</sup> Harris's suggestion of conflict between Avison and James Hesletine is corroborated by a letter written by Cowper to his brother the Earl about a year later. The Dean recorded approaches previously made to Hesletine by Avison and Garth (here

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<sup>45</sup> Stanley Sadie, 'Garth, John', *Grove*, 7, pp. 170-1.

<sup>46</sup> *NC* 30 June, 7-14 July 1750.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-13 July 1751.

<sup>48</sup> A canon at the Cathedral.

<sup>49</sup> *Diary of G. W. Harris*, 31 October 1751.

<sup>50</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 159, 26 November 1752.

called ‘the two leaders’) with the intention of amalgamating the Durham and Newcastle bands and using the new large band to play in concerts in both centres; the subscription series in the two cities would then take place in alternate weeks to maximise the resources available to each and to increase the likelihood of music-lovers attending both series. Hesletine had evidently spurned the suggestion in no uncertain terms, a refusal that Cowper put down to Hesletine’s fear of professional competition:

It is in great deal owing to his own jealousy, who cannot bear a Competitor, that these ... people have not coalesced with them of his Band, for they [Avison and Garth] have often offer’d it, and the two leaders particularly without reward or pay. But so it is, and the quarrel now has subsisted for so many years that there is no hopes of it ever being brought to an end.<sup>51</sup>

There is no record of Avison’s behaviour towards Hesletine or any indication that Hesletine might have been provoked. Hesletine’s temper had made life difficult for him before – in 1727 he had come very close to dismissal after refusing to apologise for ‘notoriously abusing’ one of the prebendaries.<sup>52</sup> His refusal to co-operate with Avison and Garth had unforeseen and, to the Cathedral personnel, unwelcome consequences. Garth had influential connections – amongst others, he taught the children of the Earl of Darlington at Raby Castle.<sup>53</sup> In 1752 the Earl and a number of other gentlemen proposed a winter series of concerts to be supported financially by subscription and to be directed musically by Garth, for whose benefit the profits would be dedicated. Twelve concerts were to be held fortnightly; the price of subscription is not stated.<sup>54</sup> Cowper makes it clear that Avison was also involved; his phrasing – ‘the organist at Newcastle joyns his forces with all his Myrmidons’<sup>55</sup> – suggests that he too was beginning to take offence at Avison and Garth’s activities. His annoyance can be explained by the fact that the subscription series was to be held in Durham – a logical decision since the main

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<sup>51</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 159, 26 November 1752.

<sup>52</sup> CA DAB 12 August, 19 August, 2 September 1727.

<sup>53</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 159, 26 November 1752.

<sup>54</sup> NC 9 December 1752.

<sup>55</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 159, 26 November 1752.

beneficiary lived in the city, but one which brought the series, as Cowper pointed out, into direct competition with the Cathedral's own winter series.<sup>56</sup>

Avison and Garth, however, may not have seen the two series as competitors – they certainly did not anticipate a hostile reaction from Cathedral personnel. Faced with the same problem as the series in Newcastle – the lack of a high-quality singer – they sought to apply the same solution and approached individual members of the Cathedral Choir with a view to enlisting the aid of one or more of them.<sup>57</sup> This move, if tactless, suggests that they saw no reason for the Cathedral personnel to object. Cowper thought otherwise and wrote to his brother in martial terms:

Having no vocal, they have bid high for one of the Boys of the Choir but I have forbid either Vocal or Instrumental to give the foe any assistance if they march this way.<sup>58</sup>

Garth and Avison went ahead nevertheless; the first concert of the new series took place on 6 December 1752. Cowper claimed that the series had only fourteen subscribers, described by the *Newcastle Courant* as 'several Gentlemen in and about the city'.<sup>59</sup> Each subscriber had two tickets whose conditions restricted their transferral to women only; as some at least of the Gentlemen subscribers played in the band, such transferrals meant a high preponderance of women in the audience – another cause of derision for Cowper.<sup>60</sup> Visitors were admitted free on the night of the concert. Cowper

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<sup>56</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 159, 26 November 1752.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Mountier, Avison's original soloist at the Newcastle subscription series in 1735, had almost immediately been joined in the choir by his father [DAB 1 November 1735]. The elder Mountier continued in the choir without incident until his death in c1750 [TA, *passim*]. In 1741, Act Books record financial problems for the son who was given advances on his salary in February and July [DAB 14 February, 20 July 1741]. His wife was granted one guinea 'in Consideration of her illness and great Distress' [DAB 20 July 1741]. By October Mountier jnr. was told to return to his duties in the choir or be dismissed [DAB 23 October 1741] but apparently he did not return. A year later he was given three guineas 'in consideration of his present Circumstances' [DAB 19 October 1742]. He does not appear again in Cathedral Records and was clearly no longer a member of the choir after 1742. The man who accompanied Hesletine south in 1748 was therefore the elder Mountier.

<sup>58</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 159, 26 November 1752.

<sup>59</sup> NC 9 December 1752. Cowper's triumphalism on this point may indicate that the choir concerts were better subscribed.

<sup>60</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 159, 10 December 1752. Each ticket admitted one gentleman or two ladies.

refused to attend but could not bear to miss what happened and sent his wife instead; she brought back a programme of the music played and an account of the evening's entertainment. (She probably also attended the rehearsal earlier in the day.) The Dean reported to his brother:

The Musick was chiefly Instrumental [,] performers at least equal to our own; but the choice of it wretched. It open'd with the Overture of Clothilde,<sup>61</sup> an Opera many ages older than Camilla<sup>62</sup> and consisted of Concertos and solos from Rameau, Giardini and Avison. Poor Corelli, and Handel were excluded almost Nem. Con. Only one man amongst them pleaded hard that Corelli might conclude the affair, was told that there was not one part of Corelli that the children in the streets could not whistle from beginning to end and their music was to be all New.<sup>63</sup>

Avison had introduced Rameau to Newcastle audiences the previous year after receiving a gift of a number of scores.<sup>64</sup> Cowper's main objection, however, was probably to the Italian element – he had previously referred to Italian composers as producing 'riff-raff Music' (although he presumably made an exception of Corelli).<sup>65</sup> His comments on the omission of the music of Handel are more significant; Harris's letters and a number of advertisements indicate that these were precisely the kind of works performed by the Cathedral band. *Alexander's Feast* (or excerpts from it) was performed on St. Cecilia's Day 1749,<sup>66</sup> for instance, and again in the Race Week concert the following July;<sup>67</sup> the opening concert in the 1753-4 Cathedral subscription series included 'some CHORUS's composed by Mr. HANDELL'.<sup>68</sup> (See Table 5.2, p. 93) Cowper may have been aware

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<sup>61</sup> By Francesco Conti, composed 1706.

<sup>62</sup> Performed in London, April 1706. Burney, *A General History*, Vol. II, p. 656.

<sup>63</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 161, 10 December 1752.

<sup>64</sup> NC 14-21 September 1751.

<sup>65</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 161, 21 November 1746.

<sup>66</sup> NC 11-18 November 1749.

<sup>67</sup> NJ 30 June 1750.

<sup>68</sup> NC 29 September 1753.



**Table 5.2: Known repertoire at Cathedral choir concerts**

<b>Date</b>		<b>Concert</b>	<b>Repertoire</b>
1749	22 November	St. Cecilia's Day	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
1750	19 July	Race Week	'some favourite SONGS and CHORUS'S but not the MESSIAH as some Person, without their knowledge, had advertised it' <b>NC 6-13 July 1751</b>
1753	2 October	First subscription	'Some CHORUS'S composed by Mr. HANDELL' <b>NC 29 September 1753</b>
1755	26 February	Benefit for family of Henry Marshall (singing man)	'consisting chiefly of VERSES and CHORUS'S out of the MESSIAH' <b>NC 15 February 1755</b>
	6 August	Race Week	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
1756	28 July	Race Week	Vocal and Instrumental Music
1757	15 March	Last subscription	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
	4 October	First subscription	<i>L'Allegro ed il Penseroso</i>
1758	3 October	First subscription	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
1759	2 October	First subscription	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
1761	24 March	Last subscription	<i>Messiah</i>

of the criticisms made of Avison's opinion of Handel as expressed in the *Essay on Musical Expression*; Avison's reply to these criticisms, first published a month after Garth's series began, may not yet have come to his notice. Avison was also much attached to Corelli (who had been the teacher of Avison's own teacher, Geminiani) describing him in the *Essay* as 'faultless' and his works as 'immortal'. The criticism of Corelli at the rehearsal is highly unlikely therefore to have originated with Avison. The omission of these two composers from the Durham concert may not have stemmed, as Cowper implied, from a contempt for their music, but may have been a deliberate commercial decision. A concert full of 'new' music would offer repertoire of a very different kind to that played in the Cathedral series; by this means, Avison and Garth might have hoped to gain the advantage of offering something novel while avoiding an appearance of direct competition, thus persuading the inevitably limited audience to attend both series. 'The Newcastle party' may not have been as confrontational as the Cathedral personnel assumed.

### III: Gentlemen versus clerics

The choir concert's supporters were extravagantly confident that the new series would not prosper. Cowper remarked that 'I shall not fear that [the] crowds will be injured in their Concert' and said that the Cathedral band were 'all in good spirits and make very merry with their antagonists'.<sup>69</sup> But Garth's series completed its first season successfully and rivalry extended into the following summer – the two parties twice held concerts within days of each other, in June (probably Assize Week) and July (in Race Week). Garth's June concert was relatively conventional and included 'a Violoncello Concerto, composed and executed by Mr. Garth, which was justly ... applauded by all present'.<sup>70</sup> The Cathedral's concert, two days earlier, was more unusual, being held in the open-air in the gardens at Old Durham, a large house (just outside the city) which was a fashionable resort for ladies and gentlemen in the manner of Vauxhall and other gardens in London.<sup>71</sup> Concerts at Old Durham enjoyed a brief popularity at this time, although most were probably private affairs; a concert held there the following year was reported by the *Newcastle Courant*:

Last Wednesday Evening was performed in the Gardens at Old Durham, a concert of vocal and instrumental Musick, by several Gentlemen, for their own Amusement. The Double-base, Bassoon, French-horn, Hautboy, and Kettle-Drum Parts, by the Rev. Dr. Sharp's Sons, the other Instrumental Parts, by the Gentlemen of the Choir, and the vocal Part by Mr. Clark. The Company, which was very large and genteel, universally applauded the Performance; and the fine Evening with the Pleasantness of the Gardens, made it altogether a most agreeable Entertainment.<sup>72</sup>

The Sharps were another of the cosmopolitan families of Durham prebendaries – members of the family held the Archdeaconry of Northumberland almost to the end of

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<sup>69</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 161, 10 December 1752.

<sup>70</sup> *NJ* 9-16 June 1753.

<sup>71</sup> *NC* 9 June 1753.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 May 1754.

the century. Like the Dean, they frequently held concerts at their house in the College; in 1751, for instance, Harris heard *Messiah* sung twice in one week at the Sharps' house.<sup>73</sup> The first occasion was arranged by the Dean for the entertainment of the Bishop; the second was a repeat performance given because of the popularity of the first. The audience was principally made up of prebendaries and their families.<sup>74</sup>

In Race Week at the end of July 1753, the Cathedral's concert took the form of a benefit for two of its singing men, Cornforth Gelson and one of the three Paxton brothers, probably the middle brother, William.<sup>75</sup> For his concert, Garth brought in some heavy-weight soloists – Felice Giardini and his wife, the singer, Signora Vestris.<sup>76</sup> Giardini held a benefit the day following Garth's concert.<sup>77</sup> When the Italians moved on to perform at a Race Week concert in York the following month,<sup>78</sup> Garth went with them and returned the favour by playing in Signora Vestris's benefit.<sup>79</sup>

In the autumn, Garth may have tried to pre-empt the Cathedral series, which began on 2 October,<sup>80</sup> by opening his own series unusually early on 13 September.<sup>81</sup> Avison's continued involvement is attested by Harris who attended the second concert of the series and commented in his diary: 'Avison, Garth, &c. played. Only one song. Began about ½ hour past 6 & ended quarter past 8 o'clock'.<sup>82</sup> The rivalry continued over the next summer and a new development briefly undermined the Cathedral band. Avison and Garth had apparently not given up hopes of securing a singer from the choir

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<sup>73</sup> The College was the name given to the Cathedral Close.

<sup>74</sup> Diary of G. W. Harris, 25-8 September 1751.

<sup>75</sup> The elder two Paxton brothers – Robert and William were both choristers and singing men at the Cathedral; Robert died young in 1751 [Burial Registers of St. Oswald's Church, Durham, 2 February 1751]. The youngest brother, Stephen, was a chorister but seems to have argued with the Dean and Chapter and left for London where he built a successful career. For details of the family, see Brian Crosby, 'Stephen and Other Paxtons: An investigation into the identities and careers of a family of eighteenth-century musicians', *ML*, 81 (2000), pp. 41-64.

<sup>76</sup> *NC* 21 July 1753.

<sup>77</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>78</sup> *YC* 21 August 1753.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>80</sup> *NC* 29 September 1753.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 September 1753.

<sup>82</sup> Diary of G. W. Harris, 27 September 1753.

and had at last succeeded. To Cowper this was a particularly aggravating blow, as it involved a man to whom he and his brother had been particularly generous:

[Paxton] at [present] is in open Rebellion against me, and what is worse his Rebellion has brought our Concert to be on its last legs, as he has gone over to our Enemies' Quarters. I have not yet heard that he or Guelson (the other Reprobate who I borrowed your Fiddle for, and is also a Deserter) are as yet receiv'd by them, but their own Desertion has made them incapable of being admitted into our own ...<sup>83</sup>

There is no clear indication whether Gelson and Paxton did indeed sing in Garth's subscription series (now known as the Gentlemen's Subscription Concert),<sup>84</sup> but Cowper's enmity chased at least one of them from the Cathedral. In December of the same year, Gelson was suspended and, in January 1755, dismissed for fathering an illegitimate child;<sup>85</sup> as the child was nearly a year and a half old and Gelson had been openly supporting it financially,<sup>86</sup> it is difficult to believe that the Dean had not heard of the matter before or that he was not using it as an excuse to be rid of Gelson. The singing man seems to have been forced out of Durham altogether; he briefly stayed at Morpeth, holding a benefit there in Race Week 1755,<sup>87</sup> and in the following April found himself employment as 'Master and Teacher of Church Musick' in Edinburgh,<sup>88</sup> where he seems to have remained for the rest of his life.

The rivalry between the two series continued over the next few years with competing winter series and summer concerts. In May 1755, Garth copied the cathedral habit of holding an outdoor concert;<sup>89</sup> the year after that, the choir and the Sharps held an ambitious mini-festival of four concerts, two held on the river banks and the river, the others, unusually, in the Cathedral itself:

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<sup>83</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, pp. 174-5, 20 September 1754.

<sup>84</sup> *NJ* 14-21 September 1754.

<sup>85</sup> *CA DAB* 4 January 1755.

<sup>86</sup> Baptismal Registers of St. Margaret's Church, Durham, 12 August 1753.

<sup>87</sup> *NJ* 4-11 October 1755.

<sup>88</sup> *NC* 17 April 1756.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 May 1755.

We hear from Durham, that last Thursday se'nnight the Sons of Dr. Sharp, in company with most of the musical Gentlemen and Quire of that Place, gave a concert of vocal and instrumental Musick upon the Banks and upon the River, ... consisting of several Overtures, Songs and Choruses. The Instruments were two French Horns, two Hautboys, two Bassoons, Flutes, Flagelets, Violins, and Basses. – On Saturday, the same was repeated in the Church, in that Part of the Steeple called the Lanthorn.<sup>90</sup> The Solemnity of the Pieces inspired the Hearers with an awful Kind of Satisfaction, infinitely superior to the Pleasure experienced by lighter Pieces. Tuesday was a second in the Church; and Wednesday Evening, there was another on the Water and the Banks.<sup>91</sup>

The Gentlemen's Subscription Concert generally held concerts on the King's birthday in November,<sup>92</sup> while the Cathedral celebrated St. Cecilia at much the same time.<sup>93</sup> Little information survives about the repertoire at these concerts although the Cathedral band continued to emphasise Handel, concluding the 1756-7 season with a performance of *Acis and Galatea*,<sup>94</sup> while Garth's concerts concentrated more on instrumental music.

In mid-1757, doubts surfaced about the continued viability of the Gentlemen's Subscription Concert; Cowper wrote to his brother:

When the Mich[aelmas] Geese are put to the Spit, our concerts begin ... I beleive one more Winter leaves us Masters of the Field, for the Gentlemen Subscribers are heartily sick of the Expençe of theirs, and the Chief Manager has left this Town and Country for good and all.<sup>95</sup>

The series went ahead however, starting a week after the Choir began their winter series with a performance of Handel's *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso*.<sup>96</sup> The following summer, Garth again hired Felice Giardini for a concert in August, putting on two concerts on successive nights in August, following another benefit for William Paxton, who must have made his peace with Spencer Cowper.<sup>97</sup> One of Garth's concerts was probably a

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<sup>90</sup> i.e. under the tower.

<sup>91</sup> NC 5 June 1756.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 15 November 1755, 6 November 1756.

<sup>93</sup> NC 18 November 1758.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 12 March 1757.

<sup>95</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 190, 11 September 1759.

<sup>96</sup> NC 29 September 1759.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 29 July 1758.

benefit for Giardini; both men had performed in Avison's Race Week concert in Newcastle the previous week.<sup>98</sup> The 1758-9 season went ahead as usual, as did the concerts in the following year. The 1759-60 season, however, was the last Gentlemen's Subscription Series to be advertised. No reason is known for its demise; the financial difficulties mentioned by Cowper in his letter of 1757 may at last have caught up with the organisers.

Cowper's letters convey the impression that the personnel involved in the two series were not only professional but also personal rivals. During this decade, however, Garth and at least some of the Cathedral personnel seem to have been on good terms and to have performed together on a number of occasions. A concert held in November 1754 by the Mayor of Durham to celebrate the King's birthday included amongst the performers the visiting French-horn virtuosi, Charles and Son, 'several Gentlemen of the Town', John Garth and 'the Gentlemen of the Choir who performed the Vocal Parts with great Applause'.<sup>99</sup> The Vestry Minutes of Stockton Parish Church detail payments (for the opening of the new organ) both to Garth and to 'players and singers' from Durham.<sup>100</sup> The annual dinner and pre-series meeting of subscribers to the Gentlemen's Subscription Concert was even held in the inn – the Star and Rummer – run by the singing man Peter Blenkinsop,<sup>101</sup> and no less than nine people connected with the Cathedral subscribed to the eight volumes of Garth's version of *Marcello's Psalms*, which was published yearly from 1757 and contained a preface by Charles Avison. The

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<sup>98</sup> NC 22 July 1758.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 9 November 1754.

<sup>100</sup> DRO EP/Sto/30 Vestry Book Stockton Parish Church 1762-1926.

<sup>101</sup> NC 23 October 1756, 16 September 1758.

*To the Honourable and Right Reverend,*

**R I C H A R D**

*Lord Bishop of Durham*

*The PSALMS of*

**M A R C E L L O**

*Are Humbly Dedicated By*

*HIS LORDSHIP'S*

*most Obliged, and  
Obedient, Servant*

*John Garth*

Plate 10: Dedication page of the first volume of Garth's *Marcello's Psalms* (1757).

subscribers included the Bishop of Durham, four prebendaries, the Dean and Chapter (who ordered two sets presumably for the use of the choir), James Hesletine and, most surprisingly, Spencer Cowper himself.<sup>102</sup> It is clear that there was not as sharp a division, personally or professionally, between the Cathedral personnel and the party supporting John Garth as Cowper's letters would otherwise suggest.

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<sup>102</sup>*The first fifty Psalms Set to Music by Benedetto Marcello ... and adapted to the English Version by John Garth* (London: John Johnson, 1757-65), Vols 1-8.





Spring-Garden Concerts,  
VOCAL and INSTRUMENTAL  
MUSIC,

**W**ILL begin on THURSDAY the 21<sup>st</sup> of MAY, 1767, for fourteen Weeks, (the Race and Assize Weeks not included, being no Concerts): The second Concert on Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> (Thursday being Ascension Day); and continued on the Thursdays afterwards as usual. — The Proprietor begs Leave to return his sincere Thanks to all his Benefactors the last Season, and hopes for the Continuance of their Favours this. He has taken all proper Care to provide a good Band of Music in hopes to give Satisfaction to Ladies and Gentlemen.

*As all possible Means will be taken at a very great Expence to carry it on, for the Amusement of Ladies and Gentlemen, the Proprietor hopes for Encouragement.*

TICKETS for the Season, at 10 s. 6 d. each, transferable to one Gentleman or two Ladies, to be had at Mr Hawthorn's, next Door to the Post-house; Mr Slack's Shop, the Head of the Middle-street; Mr Charulley's Bookseller, at the Bridge-end; and of Tho. Moore, at the Sun, in the Close. Non-subscribers 1 s. each at the Gate per Night. To begin at Half an Hour after Six o'Clock the two first Concerts; then altered to Seven till August; and then at Six, in the Evenings.

N. B. The House is now opened, where proper Attendance is given. Ladies and Gentlemen may have Coffee, Tea, Cakes, &c. as usual.

☞ All Persons that are not Subscribers, walking in the Garden at any Time, to pay Three-pence, to be allowed in any Thing the House affords, kept by Tho. Moore.

Plate 11: Advertisement for Spring Gardens, Newcastle 1767 [NC 9-16 May 1767]

# 6

## **‘THAT FLOOD OF NONSENSE’: SUMMER CONCERTS IN NEWCASTLE**

### **I: Wrangles and rivals**

Charles Avison’s part in the later Durham controversies is uncertain; Harris’s diaries indicate that he was involved in the first two series of the Gentlemen’s Subscription Concert and that Garth’s Durham subscription series and the Newcastle series alternated, week and week about, to allow the performers to play in both. No references remain to confirm Avison’s participation in later series although his friendship with Garth continued. Avison recommended to Garth a project that he had originally considered himself – the arrangement of the psalms of Benedetto Marcello – which Avison felt would remedy the defects in church music on which he had commented in the *Essay*. Advertising the original intended work at the back of the second edition of the *Essay* in 1753, he remarked that the Psalms would exemplify ‘*The GRAND, the BEAUTIFUL*

*And the PATHETIC*’ and a ‘variety of subsidiary Styles in Musical Expression’, and would be ‘of singular Use to the *Organists of Parochial Churches*’ encouraging ‘a finer Taste and Method both in their Compositions and *extempore Performances*’.<sup>1</sup> But it was Garth who produced the eight volumes of psalms in an English version published between 1757 and 1765 and dedicated to the Bishop of Durham. Avison contributed a Preface which reiterated his preoccupation with the music of the ancients and condemned the present state of music, much of which was attributed to composers setting inferior words, what Avison called ‘mean and trivial poetry’. Although Garth’s name appears alone on the title page, prefaces to the various volumes refer repeatedly to ‘the authors’ and Avison may have collaborated with him on at least some of the psalms – he certainly produced one for the coronation of George III in 1761.<sup>2</sup>

Avison’s activities in Newcastle remained largely unchanged throughout the 1750s; he continued to compose and to teach – one of his pupils, Matthias Hawdon, became organist at Holy Trinity Church, Hull, in 1751 in succession to William Avison.<sup>3</sup> He organised the regular events of Newcastle’s musical year – the winter subscription series, and Race and Assize Week concerts – and in 1751 added an extra concert, an annual benefit for the new Infirmary which was opened in March;<sup>4</sup> Avison’s concert took place six months later and raised £36 15s., ‘Mr. Avison being at the necessary expences of Lights, &c’.<sup>5</sup> This concert was held for only four years, the last being put on in 1754.<sup>6</sup> Avison’s habit of advertising only essential details of his concerts – time, place and cost – means that little can be reconstructed of repertoire or performers at this period. Avison introduced Rameau to northern audiences in 1751 ‘[adapted] to the Use

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<sup>1</sup> Avison, *Essay*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

<sup>2</sup> See below.

<sup>3</sup> *NJ* 15-22 June 1751.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 March 1751.

<sup>5</sup> *NC* 31 August-7 September 1751.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 August 1754.

of our Concert' (presumably by Avison himself)<sup>7</sup> and welcomed the French horn virtuoso, Mr. Charles, to the city again. In the *Essay on Musical Expression*, Avison had expressed a dislike of the use of wind instruments (in which he may have included the brass) in orchestras, owing to the fact that they 'are all so different in their Tone, and in their Progressions through the various Keys from those of the stringed kind, besides the irremediable Disagreement of their rising in their Pitch, while the others are probably falling'.<sup>8</sup> He apparently had no objection to their solo use, however, and hired Charles and his son to play in two subscription concerts in October and December 1754. The Charleses also visited Durham for two further concerts and then moved on to Hexham for yet another concert in early 1755.<sup>9</sup>

After several quiet, apparently uneventful years, Avison made a number of changes to his regular musical routine in 1757. In May, he started a new series of concerts, a subscription of four held at monthly intervals from May to August.<sup>10</sup> His vehement condemnation of summer entertainments in the *Essay* as containing 'a flood of nonsense' in the form of 'shallow and unconnected Compositions', suggests that his own series might have been intended to counter these tendencies and to present the summer concert-goer with what Avison considered to be better-quality music.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, as usual, no indication of repertoire is given in Avison's advertisements. The series may also have had a financial *raison d'être*; in October of the same year there is evidence

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<sup>7</sup> NC 14-21 September 1751.

<sup>8</sup> Avison, *Essay*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, pp. 114-5.

<sup>9</sup> NC 18 January 1755.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 30 April 1757; NJ 21-28 May, 25 June-2 July, 23-30 June 1757.

<sup>11</sup> Avison, *Essay*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, p. 72.

that Avison was facing difficulties with regard to the subscription series. (This was the year in which Spencer Cowper suggested that the Gentlemen's Subscription Concert in Durham was experiencing financial problems.) Avison announced a rise in the price of tickets for the series, from 10s. 6d. to 13s. for the full subscription and from 2s. 6d. to 3s. for individual tickets purchased on the night.<sup>12</sup> His stated reason was a rise in expenses, although he disguised it as an improvement to the concerts:

As the Room will be illuminated with Wax Lights, to give more elegance to the Concert, it is hoped the Advance of the Tickets on that Account, will not be disapproved by the Subscribers.<sup>13</sup>

At this time he had, according to a later estimate, 140 subscribers.<sup>14</sup>

The price rise signalled the start of a troubled year and a half for Avison although the early part of 1758 seems to have been relatively quiet. Avison put on a summer subscription series of five monthly concerts from April to August,<sup>15</sup> and Race and Assize Week concerts as usual in June and July respectively,<sup>16</sup> the latter including Felice Giardini who went on to play in Garth's concert in Durham, the following week.<sup>17</sup> But financial problems still loomed large. The price of subscription to the summer concerts was astonishingly high – half a guinea for three concerts (compared to the same price for twelve winter concerts) or 3s. for an individual ticket bought on the door. Subscribers could also buy individual tickets in advance but these cost a near-prohibitive 5s. Perhaps something was said to Avison; for the Race and Assize Week concerts, the tickets were back down to the previous price of 2s. 6d.<sup>18</sup> By this time, Avison had something else on his mind – he was facing, apparently for the first time, a major challenge on his own ground.

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<sup>12</sup> *NC* 24 September 1757.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*. The use of wax candles also affected the economic viability of concerts in York later in the century. See Chapter 13.

<sup>14</sup> *NJ* 4-11 November 1758.

<sup>15</sup> *NC* 25 March 1758.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 June, 22 July 1758.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 July 1758. See Chapter 4.

<sup>18</sup> *NC* 1 July 1758.

A notice in the *Newcastle Journal* in July 1758 advertised that:

Mr. CLAGET Begs Leave to acquaint the PUBLICK, THAT he has Open'd a SCHOOL in the BIGG-MARKET, Opposite to Mr. PARKER's, for Teaching DANCING, the VIOLIN, VIOLONCELLO, GUITAR, CITRA, &c.<sup>19</sup>

Charles Claget was an Irishman from Waterford who was around eighteen years old when he arrived in Newcastle in 1758<sup>20</sup> – this may have been his first attempt to establish himself as a professional musician. His reasons for choosing to settle in Newcastle are not known. Claget taught dancing on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays – mornings and evenings – presumably leaving the rest of the week free to teach music; his advertisement claimed that his charges were the same as those of ‘other Masters’ in the city.<sup>21</sup> Avison, despite being older (nearly fifty years old at this time) and well-established, does not seem to have received this newcomer well (although it is fair to say that the evidence on this matter comes only from Claget). Claget claimed that he had merely held two benefit concerts (not advertised in local papers) but that Avison had somehow been led to suspect that Claget was setting up, or proposing to set up, a rival subscription series – no doubt a sensitive issue in view of the continuing rivalry in Durham.<sup>22</sup> The two men quarrelled, an event described by Claget as ‘the unlucky Difference, [which] happened betwixt him and Mr. Avison’.<sup>23</sup> When Claget held a third benefit concert on 18 December 1758, therefore, he was careful to add a long paragraph of explanatory apologies to his advertisement:

N.B. As some Persons misjudging Mr. Claget's Intention have taken Publication of a Concert as an Opposition; he desires they wouldn't look on it in that Light for the future, but consider Music is his Profession: That this is not a Subscription Concert, but one benefit night, what is commonly granted to any

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<sup>19</sup> *NJ* 29 July-5 August 1758.

<sup>20</sup> Brian Boydell, *Rotunda Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992). For Claget's early career, see p. 77. Newcastle newspapers and parish registers use *Claget* or *Clagget* indiscriminately; the version adopted here is that used by Charles Claget in his own advertisements.

<sup>21</sup> *NJ* 29 July-5 August 1758.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-16 December 1758.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem.*

Performers, tho' they stay not a Week on the Spot: That he had two before the Unlucky Difference happened betwixt him and Mr. Avison, and always proposed having one in the Summer and one in the Winter, the Truth of which he dares to say Mr. Avison will justify to the Curious, and further, this Difference caused a Delay, or he proposed having it above a month sooner.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, Avison was faced with a controversy concerning the tickets for the winter subscription series. This seems to have been provoked by the increase in ticket prices of the preceding year, but the specific objections raised were to conditions attached to the tickets, namely, that they were transferable only to ladies and not to gentlemen. In a column-long letter to the *Newcastle Journal*, Avison claimed that this was not a new condition but merely the enforcement of an old condition that had been allowed to lapse. Significantly, he seems to have felt obliged to spend much space justifying his own position, detailing how he had taken over the financial organisation of the series as well as its musical direction and implying that he had over the years absorbed much of the increasing expense of the series:

The contingent Charges can hardly be ascertained such, I mean, as the purchasing and continually repairing of Instruments; the constant Expenditure for Music, &c., and the maintaining of Apprentices; all these are chiefly necessary in the Business of Public Concerts, and may be computed, I believe, to balance any Amount that can arise from the Subscription as it now stands.<sup>25</sup>

He pointed out that he had always taken care to consult friends and subscribers about changes to the concerts and that 'a considerable Part of my Time hath been applied to the Business and Care of the Concerts that I might conduct them after the best Manner in my power'.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, he felt it necessary to justify not only himself but also the habit of holding public concerts, insisting that there were 'many ... Advantages accruing to Society from the public Use of Music'.

Public music is of Public utility; not only as it promotes several valuable Branches of Trade, by the frequent Resort of the

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<sup>24</sup> *NJ* 9-16 December 1758.

<sup>25</sup> *NJ* 4-11 December 1758.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*.

genteeler People, but as it also keeps alive and improves the social and benevolent Affections, by the general Intercourse of Friends and Acquaintance, which it occasions.

I can also affirm with Truth, that the Concerts in Newcastle have afforded entertainment to many Strangers of Character and Taste, whose Approbation of the Appearance, the Music, the Place, and the Decorum of the Whole have reflected some Reputation on the People who encourage and protect them.<sup>27</sup>

He had not, he claimed, been able to plead his case in person to subscribers as he had been 'prevented by an indisposition, which, at that Time, confined me to my Chamber'.<sup>28</sup> According to a letter from a supporter, he had been so distressed, or angered, by the controversy that he had seriously considered giving up the financial management of the series (though not the musical direction). He had, his supporter said:

been called to account for assuming the sole direction of both the performance and subscription, and thereby giving an offence where he intended a service. For that reason, he was desirous to give up the management of the concerts to any gentleman who would undertake it; and, at the same time to submit his best service to their commands, rather chusing to assist, than preside, where it was so precarious to please.<sup>29</sup>

By March 1759, Avison had changed his mind, or been persuaded to continue, a decision which, according to his supporter, 'particularly pleased' subscribers.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the supporter took care to list all the prestigious jobs (including the York Minster post) that Avison had allegedly turned down in order to remain in Newcastle, as if to remind readers how lucky they were to have so eminent a man in their midst.<sup>31</sup>

Avison's troubles were not over. Charles Claget was still in the city and apparently planned a long stay. He held another benefit concert in April 1759,<sup>32</sup> a few days before Avison opened his third summer subscription series.<sup>33</sup> He was joined about

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<sup>27</sup> *NJ* 4-11 December 1758.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>29</sup> *NJ* 10-17 March 1759.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>31</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>32</sup> *NC* 21 April 1759.

<sup>33</sup> *Idem.*



this time by his younger brother Walter, who played cello and flute solos in the concert and afterwards advertised in the *Newcastle Journal* stating that:

during his Stay in Newcastle, he will teach all Modern Instruments (Harpsichord excepted), in particular, the Violoncello and German Flute, in which he will give such Instructions, and lay such a Plan for future Practice and Improvement, as shall render the study thereof easy and entertaining.<sup>34</sup>

The plan for future study was necessary as Walter intended to stay no more than two months. In the event, he seems to have stayed twice as long, playing in a concert the brothers held in Race Week (two days after Avison's concert) and another in late September.<sup>35</sup> After this Walter left Newcastle but Charles lingered, suggesting that despite his differences with Avison, he found the city profitable. Like most concert promoters in the area, he had made contact with the Durham Cathedral choir and their singers performed in almost all his Newcastle concerts.<sup>36</sup> The programme for the June 1759 concert is the earliest complete programme known for any Newcastle concert – it consisted chiefly of solos on the violin, cello and flute played by the Claget brothers with first violin and solos played by Pietro Nardini, an Italian violinist who had been a pupil of Tartini. (Ex. 6.1, p. 111)

Nardini's appearance could be construed as a direct challenge to Avison whose summer concerts frequently featured Felice Giardini; indeed Giardini returned for Avison's Assize Week concert in August of that year.<sup>37</sup> But the challenge to Avison, if that is what Charles Claget intended, was nearly at an end; he seems to have held no further benefits in the city but joined the theatre company when it arrived for its winter season, appearing in a comedy – *The Rehearsal* – on 5 November<sup>38</sup> and as Harlequin in

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<sup>34</sup> *NJ* 2-9 June 1759.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-23 June 1759; *NC* 22 September 1759.

<sup>36</sup> *NJ* 13 December 1758; *NC* 21 April, 22 September 1759; *NJ* 16-23 June 1759.

<sup>37</sup> *NC* 3 November 1759.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 November 1759.

a pantomime seven days later.<sup>39</sup> He then moved on, possibly to Edinburgh,<sup>40</sup> and had returned to Ireland by 1763, where he took up a post as director of concerts at Great Britain Street Gardens.<sup>41</sup>

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**Ex. 6.1: Benefit for Charles and Walter Claget, June 1759<sup>42</sup>**

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	Composer	Performer
ACT I		
Overture with French horns	Handel	
Song		
German flute concerto		Walter Claget
Song		
Concerto	Martini	
ACT II		
Concerto	Geminiani	
Cello solo		Walter Claget
Song and Duet		
Violin solo		Sig. Nardini
Full piece with French horns and Kettle Drums		

‘Between the Acts, several Scotch Airs on the Violin, Violoncello, and German Flute’.

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## II: Spring Gardens

Avison enjoyed a quiet winter. Another increase in the price of subscription tickets for the winter series – from 13s. to 15s. – seems to have passed uncontested,<sup>43</sup> and the series was apparently uneventful. In 1760, the summer series of concerts was dropped, however, which suggests that they had not been particularly popular or successful. It must have been galling therefore to read in the *Newcastle Courant* a review of the

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<sup>39</sup> NC 10 November 1759.

<sup>40</sup> Horace Fitzpatrick, ‘Claget, Charles’, *Grove*, 4, pp. 253-5.

<sup>41</sup> Boydell, *Rotunda Music*, p. 77.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 16-23 June 1759.

<sup>43</sup> NC 29 September 1759.

festivities put on in Newcastle to celebrate the birthday (4 June) of the Prince of Wales, (very shortly to become George III):

In the Afternoon there was a grand Concert of Musick, at Mr. Callendar's new Ranelagh Garden, being the Opening for the Season, where there was a great Company, who expressed their Satisfaction at the Performance ...<sup>44</sup>

The Callendar family were local seedsmen and it is likely that they used their own nursery gardens for the concert. The review's reference to 'the Opening *for the Season*' [my italics] indicates that the use of the gardens for leisure purposes was an established custom but it is not possible to say whether concerts had been held there before – if they had, Avison's own summer series may have been a response to an entertainment he considered worthless. The use of the name *Ranelagh* in imitation of the London venue supports Roy Porter's contention that the provinces sought to emulate London fashions in such matters; it was hardly a swift emulation however. The first London gardens dated from much earlier in the century – Vauxhall for instance had established substantial music concerts in the mid-1730s<sup>45</sup> – and, locally, Durham had tried such entertainments several years before. No further advertisements for the gardens appear in local newspapers during 1760. Avison held the usual Race and Assize Weeks concerts<sup>46</sup> and the winter series was disturbed only by the death of King George II in November which necessitated a brief respectful suspension of the concerts.<sup>47</sup> In December, the composer Geminiani, now in his eighties, visited Newcastle *en route* from Edinburgh to London. Geminiani stayed with Avison (described by the *Newcastle Journal* as 'a favourite Disciple whom he [Geminiani] had not seen for many Years') and was

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<sup>44</sup> NC 7 June 1760.

<sup>45</sup> For a brief history of the development of musical entertainments at London pleasure gardens, see McVeigh, *Concert Life in London*, pp. 38-44.

<sup>46</sup> NJ 14-21 June 1760; NC 2 August 1760.

<sup>47</sup> NC 15 November 1760.

allegedly much taken by the performance on the harpsichord of Avison's older surviving son, Edward.<sup>48</sup>

In the early summer of 1761 it became clear that the idea of holding regular concerts in Callendar's gardens was gaining momentum:

A few days since a Subscription was set on Foot for opening a Weekly Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music, in the Manner of Ranelagh Gardens in London, at Mr. Callendar's Garden, and for this Purpose a Music House is built. It ... has met with great Encouragement, and will open next Thursday evening.<sup>49</sup>

Tickets were available at 10s. 6d. for the season, or 1s. per night;<sup>50</sup> this low price, compared to the 3s. per concert generally charged by Avison at this time, indicates that the organisers were aiming for a less affluent, and probably lower-class, audience than usually attended concerts in Newcastle. Concerts were held every Thursday starting at 6 pm,<sup>51</sup> and the opening on 9 July:

was Honoured with a numerous and brilliant Appearance of Ladies and Gentlemen: A good Band of Musicians was provided, whose Performance have Intire Satisfaction, and was universally applauded.<sup>52</sup>

In August, extra musicians were added to the band and the starting time was brought forward half an hour to take account of the earlier nights.<sup>53</sup> The only named soloist – a singer – was Mrs Mozzeen from the theatre company<sup>54</sup> and the season closed on 3 September.<sup>55</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Avison had nothing to do with these concerts, although his music was performed there at least once, in a concert on 6 August which included a march he

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<sup>48</sup> *NJ* 20-27 December 1760.

<sup>49</sup> *NC* 4 July 1761.

<sup>50</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>51</sup> *NJ* 4-11 July 1761.

<sup>52</sup> *NC* 11 July 1761.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 August 1761.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 August 1761.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 August 1761.

had composed for a regiment quartered locally.<sup>56</sup> The director and leader of the band at the garden concerts was a newcomer to the area – the violinist and future astronomer royal, William Herschel. Herschel, a Hanoverian by birth, had come to London in 1757 with his brother Jacob (also a musician), but they found the city ‘so overcrowded with musicians that we had but little chance of any great success’.<sup>57</sup> Jacob soon returned to the continent but around 1759 William was offered a post that brought him to the north-east:

I had an offer of going into Yorkshire where the Earl of Darlington wanted a good musician to be at the head of a small band for a regiment of Militia of which he was the Colonel. The engagement being upon a liberal plan and not binding for any stipulated length of time, I gladly accepted it ... the regiment was quartered at Richmond in Yorkshire ...<sup>58</sup>

As the Earl of Darlington was one of John Garth’s principal benefactors in the Durham subscription series, it is possible that Herschel and Garth may have become acquainted through this connection; in 1768, Herschel was one of the subscribers to Garth’s Op. 2 harpsichord sonatas.<sup>59</sup>

Herschel’s association with the militia was short-lived; by February 1761, he had moved to lodgings in Sunderland.<sup>60</sup> His reasons for choosing the town are not known. It was about twice the size of Durham; in 1801, its population was approximately 12,000 to Durham’s 7,000.<sup>61</sup> Spencer Cowper thought little of it during a visit in 1751, describing it as ‘a large filthy Town inhabited by more filthy People’<sup>62</sup> but an act of

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<sup>56</sup> NC 1 August 1761.

<sup>57</sup> Constance A. Lubbock, *The Herschel Chronicle: The life-Story of William Herschel and his sister, Caroline Herschel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 12. It is interesting to speculate that Avison’s decision to return to Newcastle from London in 1735 may have been influenced by similar considerations.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> *Six Sonata’s for the Harpsichord, Piano Forte and Organ ... composed by John Garth, Opera Secunda* (London: printed for the author, 1768).

<sup>60</sup> Lubbock, *Herschel*, p. 18.

<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>62</sup> Cowper, *Letters*, p. 142, 13 September 1751. Cowper added that: ‘the *Pier*, the only thing worthy looking at, is the largest and finest of the kind I ever saw; there is a mighty pretty *Parish Church* too, built about twenty year ago, but it is kept so filthily as makes one regret the original expence they were at in building it’.

1717 had remarked that it was ‘well-inhabited with rich and able Merchants and Tradesmen’.<sup>63</sup> These merchants probably formed the audiences for concerts such as those given by Nathaniel and Charles Love in 1733 and Mr. Noell in 1748.<sup>64</sup> Two concerts were given there in 1760 and 1762,<sup>65</sup> the first by an actress attached to the Newcastle company, Mrs. Stamper, who engaged in a mini-tour of the North-East which also included performances in Durham and Newcastle.<sup>66</sup> A musical society certainly existed in the town in the 1790s<sup>67</sup> and may have been established there considerably before that time. The members of such a society, and their families, would have provided a ready source of teaching income and it is probable that this is what chiefly occupied Herschel in the town; all his known concert activities took place in Newcastle.

Herschel does not seem to have aroused the hostility experienced by Charles Claget; he was soon playing in Avison’s subscription concerts, ‘in which I was engaged as first violin and solo player’<sup>68</sup> and making the journey between Sunderland and Newcastle on horseback in sometimes dreadful weather:

... at 9 o’clock, when I had still about 20 miles to ride, I was caught in an unusually heavy thunderstorm, which continued, accompanied by torrents of rain, with unbroken fury for three hours, and threatened me with sudden death. The distance from an inhabitation, the darkness and loneliness, obliged me nevertheless to ride on. ... At last the flashes all around me were so terrifying that my horse refused to go on; luckily at this moment I found myself near a house into which, after much knocking, I was admitted.<sup>69</sup>

Avison may have been aware that Herschel did not plan to remain permanently in the region. An attempt to obtain a post in Edinburgh was unsuccessful, however,<sup>70</sup> and

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<sup>63</sup> Act of 1717 (3 Geo. I), quoted in Surtees, *History and Antiquities of Durham*, Vol. IV, p. 259.

<sup>64</sup> See above, Chapter 3.

<sup>65</sup> NC 11 October, 18 October 1760.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 25 October 1760, 18 October 1760.

<sup>67</sup> J. Burchell, ‘Musical Societies in Subscription lists: an overlooked resource’, *A Handbook for Studies in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century English Music*, LX (Oxford: Burden and Cholij, 1998), p. 38.

<sup>68</sup> Lubbock, *Herschel*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>69</sup> Idem.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

Herschel was consequently still in the North-East in the summer of 1761 when the concerts at Mr. Callendar's gardens were proposed. In August, he wrote to his brother:

We have lately arranged in Newcastle, a concert in a garden after the style of Vauxhall, in London. I have the direction of the Music and we make up a fairly good band of about sixteen persons. At present, it is only once a week, but if it succeeds it will be oftener. This may help to make my things known; yesterday we played one of my symphonies.<sup>71</sup>

Herschel seems to have prospered financially in the area, writing that 'I live now, as to myself, entirely without care as I have a superfluity of everything necessary'.<sup>72</sup> But he was unsettled and felt insecure, filling his long journeys on horseback with melancholic musings about the future. Early in 1762 he wrote to his brother:

I am ... tired of having no home or place to be fixed in. It is true I have about three times as much as you, but I have it in such a manner, as I am sure you would not take it ... I am at present looking about for some sort or other of a place, either as organist or any other fixed kind.<sup>73</sup>

By April 1762, he had moved to become director of public concerts at Leeds,<sup>74</sup> where he played in concerts with Thomas Haxby of York;<sup>75</sup> he remained there until at least November 1764,<sup>76</sup> then moved on to a post as organist of Halifax Parish Church. By 1766 he was in Bath.<sup>77</sup> His departure from the North-East may have proved disastrous for the garden concerts, at least temporarily – there is no record of any concerts in the following year, 1762.

Avison's own regular round of concerts went ahead as usual in the 1761-2 and 1762-3 seasons with little alteration apart from the addition from 1762 of a second Race Week

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<sup>71</sup> Lubbock, *Herschel*, p. 18.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>75</sup> Hargrave, *Musical Leeds* p. 326.

<sup>76</sup> Lubbock, *Herschel*, pp. 29-41.

<sup>77</sup> *Idem.*

concert very late in the year as a result of the institution of another Race Meeting in the city.<sup>78</sup> A lavish concert to celebrate the coronation of George III in September 1761 included Avison's arrangement of a psalm by Marcello; this long work required a chorus and at least two solo singers – it is difficult to see where Avison could have obtained so large a body of vocalists locally except at Durham Cathedral. A letter to the *Newcastle Courant*, however, suggests that Avison may have looked further afield at least for soloists; the letter, written after a subscription concert in late 1762, contains a poem 'spoke extempore by a Gentleman of this Town upon hearing Signora Cremonini sing at the Concert'.<sup>79</sup> (Ex. 6.2) Clementina Cremonini was at this time contracted to the Musical Society in Edinburgh;<sup>80</sup> it is not clear whether the hiring of such outside soloists was Avison's common practice or whether he merely took advantage of the singer arriving in the city on her way south to London in search of richer opportunities.<sup>81</sup>

**Ex. 6.2: 'Lines (spoke extempore by a Gentleman of this Town, upon hearing Signora Cremonini sing at the Concert, on Wednesday last)'**

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WHEN Cremonini sings she thrills my Soul  
 With heavenly Sounds, whose Powers controul  
 Each turbulent Passion, and inspires  
 My much transported Heart with soft Desires,  
 Upon her rosy Lips the Angels dwell;  
 Her Voice surpass the Notes of Philomel!  
 Admiring Cherubs list'ning fly around,  
 And strive to catch the music-dying Sound:  
 Then mounting up, they spread their Silver Wings,  
 To Heav'n they soar and tune the golden Strings;  
 Again renew their Songs of endless Love,  
 And raise fair Cremonini's Notes above.

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Despite the lack of a summer season in 1762, the idea of garden concerts had not been abandoned; its revival in 1763 was on a much more ambitious scale than before. The

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<sup>78</sup> NC 17 October 1762.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 2 October 1762.

<sup>80</sup> Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts*, pp. 42, 202.

<sup>81</sup> The Edinburgh Society sacked her for breaking her contract. Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts*, p. 42.



gardens were renamed, though still retaining the London allusion – Spring Gardens;<sup>82</sup> this enables the identification of the site, on the then edge of the city behind St. Andrew’s Church.<sup>83</sup> A preliminary meeting of interested Gentlemen in April decided on the terms of subscription: the concerts would take place every Thursday for sixteen weeks starting on 12 May,<sup>84</sup> at a subscription cost of 10s. 6d. or 1s. for individual tickets bought on the night.<sup>85</sup> Only the first concert is documented, indicating an eclectic mix of performers – the Newcastle waits, the ‘Band belonging to Lord George Lenox’s Regiment’, and ‘several Gentlemen of the Choir at Durham’.<sup>86</sup> Later in the year, the Choir held their first known concert in Newcastle, following their annual visit to the city for the Feast of the Sons of the Clergy – a performance on 1 September of *Alexander’s Feast*.<sup>87</sup> This is the first recorded occasion in which an entire oratorio (or possibly extended extracts from it) had been sung in Newcastle, although Avison had performed isolated arias and choruses in his concerts since as early as 1739.<sup>88</sup>

Advertisements from 1764 suggest that the concerts in the Gardens were not as well-supported as the newspapers suggested. A meeting in April to plan the season<sup>89</sup> resulted in a single concert held on 21 June.<sup>90</sup> An attempt was made to restart the season the following month; on 4 July a new subscription was opened by Thomas Moore, proprietor of the Sun Inn.<sup>91</sup> Moore’s interest in musical entertainment may have been sparked by a club at his inn referred to as ‘a respectable musical club [that] met at [his]

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<sup>82</sup> *NJ* 2-9 April 1763. The area survived until well into the twentieth century, supplying a large part of the city’s water from its springs; it is now built over.

<sup>83</sup> The gardens were opposite the present site of the football ground.

<sup>84</sup> *NJ* 2-9 April 1763.

<sup>85</sup> *NJ* 9-16 April 1763.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-9 April 1763.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 August – 3 September 1763.

<sup>88</sup> *NC* 1 December 1739. Works such as *Alexander’s Feast* and *Acis and Galatea* were treated as oratorios by eighteenth-century advertisers in the North-East, although some programmes refer to the latter as a masque.

<sup>89</sup> *NJ* 21-28 April 1764.

<sup>90</sup> *NC* 16 June 1764.

<sup>91</sup> *NJ* 23-30 June 1764.

public House in the Close'.<sup>92</sup> Edward and Charles Avison, Avison's two surviving sons, were members of this club, although they may have joined it at a later date;<sup>93</sup> they are not known to have had any connection with Moore's venture at the Spring Gardens. Moore's new subscription was for eight concerts only, held weekly on Wednesday nights. He opened a house in the Gardens to provide tea and coffee<sup>94</sup> and hired local musicians, probably the waits and a few others – a concert in Race Week had to be put off because 'the Music will be engaged at the Theatre that Evening'.<sup>95</sup> The following year, 1765, Moore offered a more ambitious subscription series of sixteen weeks starting at the beginning of May at a cost of half a guinea or 1s. per night. The house in the gardens was again open for refreshments and extra accommodation was provided for use in case of bad weather.<sup>96</sup>

Meanwhile, Avison celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the concert series and his involvement in it, and took the opportunity to again alter the terms of the subscription. A rise in price from 15s. to one guinea (thus doubling the cost in the eight years between 1757 and 1765) indicates a continuing rise in expenses; Avison tried to compensate for the increase by offering as compensation two extra concerts (a series of fourteen rather than twelve).<sup>97</sup> Only two weeks later, he was forced to reconsider, as 'the Plan he has proposed for his future Concerts is objected to by some, who have hitherto honoured him with their favours'.<sup>98</sup> His revised plan was inelegant, offering two different subscriptions – the old and the new – as alternatives. If insufficient

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<sup>92</sup> E. Mackenzie, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne, including the Borough of Gateshead* (Newcastle: Mackenzie and Dent, 1827), Vol. II. p. 590.

<sup>93</sup> Iain Bain (ed.), *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick by himself* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 96.

<sup>94</sup> NC 23-30 June 1764.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 11 August 1764.

<sup>96</sup> NC 4 May 1765.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 7 September 1765.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 21 September 1765.

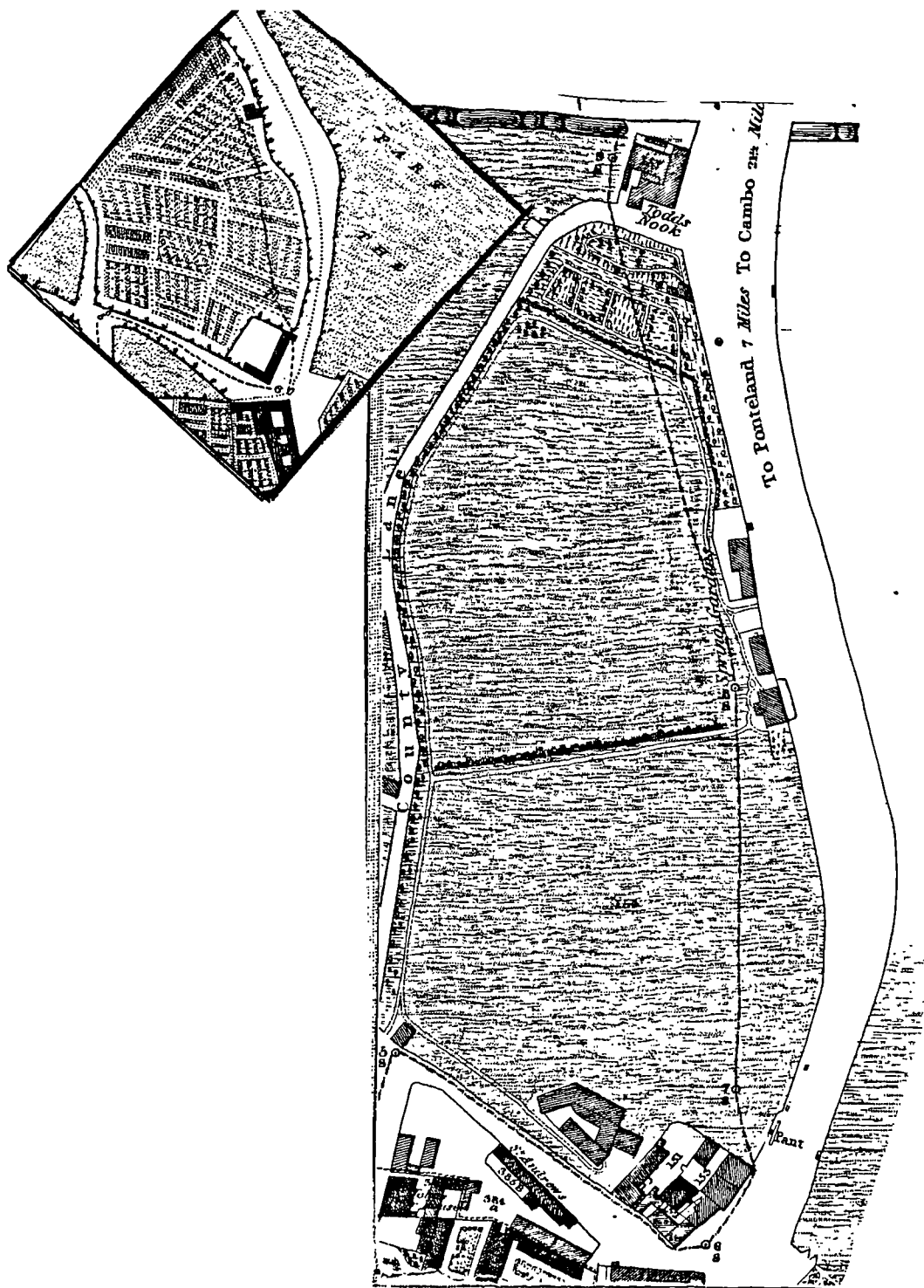


Plate 12: Plan of Spring Gardens from Oliver's *Plan of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne* (1830) and [inset] plan of Spring Gardens from Hutton's *Plan of Newcastle upon Tyne* (1772).

subscribers chose the more expensive option, the extra concerts would be cancelled and subscribers' money refunded as appropriate.<sup>99</sup> The extra concerts seem to have gone ahead.

In 1766 the concerts at the Gardens continued on the same terms as in the previous year. Moore hired at least three actresses from the local company as vocal soloists and also 'the principal Part of the Choir from Durham'.<sup>100</sup> The cost of subscription remained unchanged for the 1767 season, but in his advertisements Moore was at pains to emphasise the cost of the entertainment, adding that:

as all possible Means will be taken at a very great Expence, to carry it on, for the Amusement of Ladies and Gentlemen, the Proprietor hopes for Encouragement.<sup>101</sup>

The only surviving programme for a concert in the Gardens is that for the last concert in the 1767 season, a benefit for the vocal soloists: an actress, Mrs Hindmarsh, a young London singer, Miss Alphey, and one of the newer singing men at Durham Cathedral, John Matthews.<sup>102</sup> The concert took place on 10 September, starting at 5 pm 'on account of the Length of the Performance and Shortness of the Evening'. Plans were made to postpone it until the following day should the weather be bad.<sup>103</sup> The concert's three acts were, unsurprisingly, overwhelmingly vocal in nature. Additional solo wind parts were provided by 'the Band of the 4th, or the King's own Regiment of Foot'.<sup>104</sup> (Ex. 6.3, p. 122)

The concert was apparently the last held in the Gardens; no further advertisements appear in local papers. The attraction of fashionable London-style entertainments was evidently insufficiently strong, or the expenses too great, to make the concerts viable.

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<sup>99</sup> *NC* 21 September 1765.

<sup>100</sup> *NCh* 10 May 1766; *NJ* 10-17 May 1766.

<sup>101</sup> *NCh* 10 May 1766.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 May 1767.

<sup>103</sup> *NC* 5 September 1767. Evance was sworn in as a singing man on 20 September 1767 [DAB].

<sup>104</sup> *Idem.*

### Ex. 6.3: Programme for Spring Gardens concert, 10 September 1767

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Performers	
ACT I	
Overture	
Song	Mr. Matthews
Song	Miss Hindmarsh
Duet	Mr Matthews and Miss Alphey
ACT II	
Overture for French horns	
Song	Miss Alphey
Clarinet concerto	
Dialogue song and duet	Mr Matthews and Miss Hindmarsh
<i>The Soldier Tir'd</i> (Arne)	Mr Matthews
ACT III	
Overture French horns	
Song	Miss Hindmarsh
Bassoon concerto	
Pastoral Dialogue (two songs, duet and Chorusses)	

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The attempts to establish garden concerts in Newcastle met with more sustained success than the isolated concerts in Durham gardens during the previous decade; both seem, however, to have been a passing whim whose popularity did not endure. Elsewhere in the region, only Darlington seems to have held a summer subscription series, from 1765 until at least 1769.<sup>105</sup> This was clearly modelled on Avison's summer subscription series of the early 1760s and consisted of five concerts at monthly intervals between April and September. Darlington's music-goers were evidently highly patriotic and contrived to incorporate into the series concerts on the Queen's birthday, the King's birthday, and the anniversary of the Coronation.<sup>106</sup> Little is known about these concerts except for their location – Mr. Rysdale's Long Room – and the fact that Durham

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<sup>105</sup> NC 20 April 1765; NCh 16 September 1769.

<sup>106</sup> NCh 25 January 1766, 31 May 1766, 16 September 1769.

Cathedral singers provided vocal parts in at least one of the concerts.<sup>107</sup> The only surviving programme suggests the involvement of John Garth, as well as at least one gentleman amateur who may have led the orchestra. (Ex. 6.4)

**Ex. 6.4: Darlington Subscription concert, 17 September 1765<sup>108</sup>**

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	Composer	Performer
PART I		
Overture in <i>Sampson</i>	Handel	
Song		
Concerto XI	Corelli	
Trio	Campioni	
German flute concerto		
PART II		
Overture V	Abel	
Song		
Cello concerto	Garth	
Violin solo		A Gentleman
Coronation Anthem	Handel	

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The Darlington concerts were the last of the summer series in the northern part of the region; after their demise, only the isolated concerts of Race and Assize weeks, or the occasional concert from a visitor, were held in the months between May and September.

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<sup>107</sup> NC 14 September 1765.

<sup>108</sup> NC 14 September 1765.

# 7

## NEW BLOOD: CHANGES IN DURHAM AND YORK

### I: Reconciliation in Durham, 1760-1770

After the disappearance of the Gentleman's Subscription Series in 1760, the last traces of rivalry in Durham lingered in Race Week concerts. In 1760 and 1761 Garth's concerts were in competition with benefits for one of the choir's senior members, William Paxton;<sup>1</sup> in 1762 and in succeeding years, the Cathedral-backed concerts were given by the entire choir.<sup>2</sup> The Cathedral band continued to use these occasions to stage large-scale vocal works, chiefly by Handel – *Alexander's Feast*, *Acis and Galatea* – and Boyce's *Solomon*.<sup>3</sup> (Table 7.1, p. 125) Advertisements do not make clear whether these were complete or partial performances but as all the works are relatively short they may

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<sup>1</sup> NC 19 July 1760, 1 August 1761.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. NC 17 June 1762.

<sup>3</sup> NC 17 July 1762, 16 July 1763, 14 July 1764, 13 July 1765, 12 July 1766, 16 July 1768.

have been presented in their entirety. No references to the content of Garth's concerts survive; they are always merely described as 'of vocal and instrumental music'.<sup>4</sup> From 1768 he hired as first violin Giovanni Batista Noferi, leader of the Opera House Ballet in London;<sup>5</sup> Noferi continued to play in summer concerts in Durham until the mid-1770s and may well have been recommended by his predecessor and friend Felice Giardini.

**Table 7.1: Race Week concerts performed by Durham Cathedral Choir**

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1762	21 July	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
1763	21 July	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
1764	19 July	<i>Solomon</i> (Boyce)
1765	18 July	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
1766	17 July	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
1767	30 July	<i>Solomon</i> (Boyce)
1768	21 July	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>

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The Cathedral band's winter series continued without competitor, with James Hesletine as musical director; the 1762-3 season consisted of no less than twenty-four concerts held weekly at a cost of 2s. 6d. per night, or 15s. for a complete subscription, and finished with a performance of *Messiah* on 15 March 1763.<sup>6</sup> The price of subscription compared extremely favourably with Avison's Newcastle series, where the same subscription obtained only half the number of concerts. The Cathedral band concerts may have utilised a much higher proportion of local performers, principally from within the choir, thus reducing costs; no outside performers are named in advertisements for the Durham subscription series at this period.

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<sup>4</sup> e.g. NC 19 July 1760.

<sup>5</sup> NC 16 July 1768.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 2 October 1762, 12 March 1763.



In June 1763 James Hesletine died, apparently unexpectedly, ‘about six of the clock in the evening ... of a fit of the palsy’.<sup>7</sup> He had been organist, as the *Newcastle Courant* said, ‘above 50 years, and of so fair a Character in his Profession, that his Salary had been twice augmented by the Chapter since his first appointment’.<sup>8</sup> Hesletine’s musical abilities were unquestioned, but his uncertain temper had caused difficulties on a number of occasions and the augmentations to his salary (bringing it to £100 per annum at his death) had not been unopposed.<sup>9</sup>

The argument over his successor threatened to be acrimonious. Hesletine’s appointment, and that of his predecessor, William Greggs, from outside the Cathedral establishment, and the continuing trend to appoint singing men from beyond the area, may have led prebendaries and choir alike to expect the arrival of an outsider. No advertisements for the post are known and it is likely that names were put forward by word of mouth. Meanwhile one of the singing men, Thomas Ebdon, was required to carry out Hesletine’s duties.<sup>10</sup> Ebdon, the son of a local shoemaker, had grown up in the choir, becoming a chorister, a probationary singing man, and a full singing man in turn; his status as full singing man had been confirmed three years before in 1760 at a salary of £30 per annum.<sup>11</sup>

In October 1763, four months after Hesletine’s death, the twenty-five-year-old Ebdon was appointed organist on a full-time basis. The wording of the relevant minute in the Dean and Chapter’s Act Book makes it clear that the appointment was carried through by the Dean in the face of universal opposition – ‘contra Consilium of everyone of the Preb<sup>s</sup> present in the Chapter’.<sup>12</sup> Cowper’s reasons for this high-handed behaviour

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<sup>7</sup> *Diary of Thomas Ghyll (1700-80) Recorder of the City of Durham*, Surtees Society Vol. 118, (Durham/London: Andrews/Quaritch, 1910), p.213.

<sup>8</sup> NC 25 June 1763.

<sup>9</sup> CA TA 1762-3; CA DAB 19 November 1750.

<sup>10</sup> CA DAB 1 October 1763.

<sup>11</sup> Idem; CA TA, passim.

<sup>12</sup> CA DAB 1 October 1763, 17 November 1764.

are unknown; his support for Ebdon – whether it was based on a belief in Ebdon’s abilities or on a determination to have his own man in position – led to considerable difficulties for Ebdon himself. The Chapter refused to pay him the organist’s salary but continued to insist that he was merely a singing man performing the organist’s duties temporarily; Cowper remained firm and paid Ebdon an extra £10 per quarter from his own private income.<sup>13</sup> The Chapter’s objection, it later transpired, was not to Ebdon personally but to the Dean’s overbearing behaviour. The Recorder of Durham, Thomas Ghyll, who acted for the Cathedral in some legal matters, noted in his diary that the prebendaries felt that the Dean did not have the power to make a unilateral decision, but that the Chapter’s consent was necessary.<sup>14</sup> The argument was eventually resolved; the Chapter agreed to confirm Ebdon in his appointment, to backdate his pay to the date of Hesletine’s death (awarding him a salary of £80 per annum) and to refund the Dean the money he had given Ebdon from his private income.<sup>15</sup> The words ‘contra Consilium, etc’ in the original minute were deleted from the record thoroughly enough to be illegible; ironically, the minute agreeing that this should be done preserved the words entire.<sup>16</sup> Ebdon’s appointment was confirmed fifteen months after Hesletine’s death.<sup>17</sup>

Ebdon’s name first appears in connection with concerts in Durham in October 1764, shortly after his confirmation as organist;<sup>18</sup> it seems probable, however, that he had stood in for Hesletine here too over the previous year and may have been involved even before that. The winter subscription series therefore continued in the period after Hesletine’s death without break. Some changes were made: for Ebdon’s first series in

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<sup>13</sup> CA DRA/17 Deanery Accounts, 1763–4, *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Ghyll, *op. cit.* p. 213.

<sup>15</sup> CA DAB 28 September 1764.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>18</sup> NC 29 September 1764.

charge in 1763-4, the number of concerts was reduced to sixteen and the price of subscription from 15s. to half a guinea.<sup>19</sup> The first three concerts of the series were devoted to a complete performance of the oratorio *Samson*, each of the three parts being allocated to a separate concert.<sup>20</sup> The cost of subscription remained constant for the rest of the decade but the number of concerts continued to decline, to fourteen in 1767,<sup>21</sup> and to six (held monthly ) in 1769,<sup>22</sup> before rising again in 1771 to twelve concerts for 15s.<sup>23</sup> No reasons are apparent for these changes. Subscription series in the mid-1770s were not advertised, although there is no reason to believe they did not take place, and it is possible that the series was so well-attended that it was not necessary to advertise. The regular venue for all these concerts was ‘Mr. Richardson’s Long-Room’ (later Mr. Hoult’s) in the Red Lion in the North Bailey (now the site of Hatfield College). (Appendix 8) Information on repertoire is confined almost entirely to first nights, when it was the custom to perform extracts from oratorios; only a limited number of works are known to have been performed. (Table 7.2)

**Table 7.2: Repertoire performed at Cathedral subscription series, 1762-1768**

1762-3	15 March	Last concert	<i>Messiah</i>
1763-4	4 October	First concert	First part of <i>Samson</i>
		Second concert	Second part of <i>Samson</i>
		Third concert	Third part of <i>Samson</i>
1764-5	2 October	First concert	<i>Solomon</i> (Boyce)
1765-6	8 October	First concert	<i>Solomon</i> (Boyce)
1766-7	7 October	First concert	‘part of the Oratorio of <i>Samson</i> ’
1767-8	6 October	First concert	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
	29 March	Last concert	<i>Messiah</i>

<sup>19</sup> NC 1 October 1763.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1 October 1763.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 3 October 1767.

<sup>22</sup> NJ 30 September-7 October 1769.

<sup>23</sup> NC 26 September 1771.

Ebdon also introduced a new element to Durham's concert life, putting on performances of oratorios during Easter Week, but this was a short-lived phenomenon, lasting only from 1769 until 1772.<sup>24</sup> The usual practice was to perform *Messiah* on Easter Monday (Tuesday in 1772) at Richardson's room, charging 6d. extra for a book of the words. Ebdon also raised the price of the isolated mid-year concerts (including Race Week concerts) from the 2s. 6d. charged in Hesletine's day<sup>25</sup> to 3s., which brought the cost into line with prices in Newcastle.<sup>26</sup>

These relatively small changes were accompanied by an alteration in relations with former rivals. The first signs manifested themselves in a benefit concert given in May 1769 by John Matthews (the singing man who had appeared at the Spring Gardens in Newcastle). The concert consisted of overtures, songs and concertos, accompanied by clarinets, horns and oboes provided by the Band of the 43rd Regiment of Foot, who came down from their quarters in Newcastle. (Appendix 1) More significantly, Matthews's concert included a harpsichord sonata played by Charles Avison, the eighteen-year-old younger son of the composer.<sup>27</sup> If there had been a rift between musicians in Newcastle and the Cathedral musical personnel, it was clearly being mended in the years after Hesletine's death. The following year Matthews and another relatively new singing man, William Evance, took an almost identical concert to Newcastle – the first benefit held there by Durham singing men since Thomas Mountier's concert in 1735.<sup>28</sup>

The process of reconciliation extended itself also to John Garth. In 1769 the customary two concerts of Race Week – one promoted by Garth, the other by the

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<sup>24</sup> NC 18 March 1769, 11 April 1772.

<sup>25</sup> e.g. *ibid.*, 2 October 1762.

<sup>26</sup> e.g. *ibid.*, 18 March 1769.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 May 1769.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 January 1770.

Cathedral musicians – were reduced to one; the advertisement named Thomas Ebdon and John Garth as joint promoters.<sup>29</sup> A fortnight later, in Assize Week, they collaborated again; although two concerts were put on as usual, these were an obvious compromise between the two parties. The concert on 3 August was of vocal and instrumental music with Noferi as first violin – a type of concert previously typical of Garth – and another on 4 August was a Handelian concert of the Cathedral type, a performance of *Acis and Galatea*.<sup>30</sup> This collaboration continued over the next three years, although the winter subscription series and the Easter Week performance of *Messiah* were apparently organised by Ebdon alone. Moreover, it is clear that Garth's influence was steadily weakening. In the mid-year concerts, vocal music began to predominate rather than miscellaneous concerts; of the eight concerts organised jointly by Garth and Ebdon between 1769 and 1772, only three were of vocal and instrumental music, the other five consisting of oratorio performances including the *Royal Pastoral* by James Nares. (Table 7.3, p. 131) This tends to suggest that Ebdon was the dominant partner in the collaboration and the logical result was that Ebdon should take over the entire organisation of the concerts, an event which occurred in 1773. Advertisements for Race and Assize Week concerts in that year name Ebdon as sole organiser, with Noferi leading the orchestra on both occasions.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *NCh* 8 June 1769.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 July 1769.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 July, 31 July 1773.

**Table 7.3: Race and Assize Week concerts organised jointly by Garth and Ebdon, 1769-1772**

1769	Race Week	21 July	<i>Messiah</i>
	Assize Week	3 August	Vocal and Instrumental
		4 August	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
1770	Race Week	18 July	<i>The Royal Pastoral</i> (Nares)
		19 July	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
1771	Race Week	18 July	Vocal and Instrumental
		19 July	<i>The Royal Pastoral</i>
1772	Assize Week	25 July	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
	Race Week	31 July	Vocal and Instrumental
	Assize Week	14 August	<i>Messiah</i>

The programme for the Race Week concert of 1773 is still extant and is the only complete programme known for a Durham miscellaneous concert. (Ex. 7.1) The conventional arrangement of two acts of five items each surprisingly included only two songs.

**Ex. 7.1: Race Week concert, 5 August 1773<sup>32</sup>**

	Composer
ACT I	
Overture	Handel
Trio	Noferi
Song	Bach
Harpsichord sonata	
Full Piece	
ACT II	
Overture	Abel
Solo concerto	Noferi
Song	Smith
Cello concerto	
Full piece	

<sup>32</sup> *NCh* 31 July 1773.

The harpsichord sonata in the first half may have been played by Ebdon himself or by the singing man William Evance, who was also a composer of keyboard works. The inclusion of a cello concerto at first consideration suggests the presence of Garth, but the concerto may have been played by a new singing man, George Ashton. Ashton was a local man who had recently progressed from chorister to probationary singing man.<sup>33</sup> Confirmed as a full singing man in 1775,<sup>34</sup> he followed the well-established tradition of spending some time in London ‘to improve himself’.<sup>35</sup> His first appearance as a concert soloist had been in Newcastle a month before the Durham concert in 1773.<sup>36</sup>

Garth does not appear again in Durham as a concert promoter or as a named soloist. He certainly continued to live in the city, however, pursuing other activities. He had by this time given up his organist’s post at Sedgefield,<sup>37</sup> and his last known concerts as ‘guest’ organist were at Wakefield in 1767 and at Kirkleatham in Yorkshire in 1770.<sup>38</sup> He continued to play in Avison’s concerts in Newcastle but the greater part of his time seems to have been given over to teaching. This involved him in extensive travelling – indeed he appears to have been one of the most widely travelled of northern musicians at this time, teaching the same kind of aristocratic families as had patronised his subscription series in Durham. These families included the Noells, who had estates in Seaham and Yorkshire, and the Millbankes, into whom the Noells married. Their regard for Garth was evidently high – he was clearly regarded as more than an employee and

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<sup>33</sup> CA TA 1758/9; CA DAB 20 November 1771.

<sup>34</sup> CA DAB 20 November 1775.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 24 June 1776.

<sup>36</sup> NC 5 June 1773. See Chapter 8.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 16 February 1771.

<sup>38</sup> NCh 5 September 1767; NC 22 December 1770.

mixed socially; on one occasion in 1784, one of his aristocratic pupils visited friends in Richmond to discover that Garth was one of the dinner guests.<sup>39</sup>

## II: Changing personnel in York

The 1760s were unsettled and largely undistinguished years in York's musical life. The subscription series was still under the financial and organisational direction of the Gentlemen Directors of the Musick Assembly; the full subscription price for the twenty-one concerts was lowered in 1761 from 15s. to half a guinea, but any music-lover wishing to subscribe to only half the season paid 7s. 6d. Evening tickets cost 2s. 6d. as before.<sup>40</sup> The series was still led by Miles Coyle – a shadowy figure who rarely played solos and never advertised teaching or any other activities. Another principal performer was relatively new, both to the subscription series and to concert-giving in York. On the departure of James Nares for the Chapel Royal in 1756, the Minster organist's post had been taken over by one of Nares's former pupils, John Camidge, who had only just begun his career as organist with a brief stay in Doncaster.<sup>41</sup> Owing to a gap in newspaper records between 1756 and 1760, it is not possible to assess how quickly Camidge established himself in concert-life in the city – he held a regular benefit from 1761.<sup>42</sup>

Camidge's involvement, and Coyle's, remained constant throughout the decade but vocal soloists came and went, singing in a single series or two, holding their benefits in spring and then rarely returning. Some of these are unidentifiable at present, although they were clearly not local and it may have been the policy of the Gentlemen Directors

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<sup>39</sup> M. Elwin, *The Noels and the Milbankes: Their Letters for Twenty-Five Years, 1767-1792* (London: Macdonald and Co. 1967), pp. 146, 240.

<sup>40</sup> *YC* 6 October 1761.

<sup>41</sup> *YC* 3 February 1756, 19 August 1755. Camidge also took Nares's post as organist of St. Michael le Belfrey and of the subscription series.

<sup>42</sup> *YC* 17 March 1761.



to hire outside soloists of some standing at the time. A Miss Formantel was soloist in the 1759-60 series;<sup>43</sup> a Mr Tymms sang in two series between 1760 and 1762.<sup>44</sup> Miss Moore sang in concerts between 1765 and 1768.<sup>45</sup> The most distinguished of these singers was Miss Schmelling from Hesse-Cassel in Germany; she was later to become famous as Madame Mara.<sup>46</sup> In 1768 however the Directors hired a local woman, Mrs Hudson,<sup>47</sup> who remained the vocal soloist for almost the rest of the century. (Table 7.4)

**Table 7.4: Vocal soloists at the York Subscription series 1760-1770**

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1759060	Miss Formantel
1760-1	Mr Tymms
1761-2	Mr. Tymms
1762-3	?
1763-4	Miss Schmelling from Hesse-Cassel
1764-5	?
1765-6	Miss Moore
1766-7	Miss Moore
1767-8	Miss Moore
1768-9	Frances Hudson
1769-70	Frances Hudson

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Born Frances Hawkeswell, Mrs. Hudson had apparently been a mantuamaker until her marriage in 1763 to William Hudson, one of the York waits.<sup>48</sup> In the 1760s, William – a French horn player – was by far the better known of the two, being much in demand for concerts in York and the surrounding area. From about 1765, Coyle and Camidge's benefits usually included a concerto for two French horns;<sup>49</sup> Hudson's fellow soloist was Thomas Thackray, another local man who had been one of the witnesses at

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<sup>43</sup> YC 5 February 1760.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 20 January 1761, 2 February 1762.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 11 February 1766, 10 March 1767, 23 February 1768.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 19 July 1763, 11 October 1763, 3 April 1764.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 17 January 1769.

<sup>48</sup> Marriage Register of Holy Trinity Church, York, 23 November 1763.

<sup>49</sup> e.g. YC 8 February 1765, 27 January 1767.

For the Benefit of Mr. CAMIDGE.  
 At the Great Assembly-Room in Blake-street, YORK,  
 On Friday the 9th of March next will be perform'd,  
**The ROYAL PASTORAL.**  
 Composed by Dr. NARES.  
 After the first Part an Organ Concerto.  
 After the Performance, a B-A-L-L.  
 Tickets, at 2 s. 6 d. each, to be had at Mr. Haxby's and Mr. Mor-  
 ley's in Blake-street; Mr. Shaw's in Coney-street; and Mr. Camidge's  
 in Goodramgate. To begin at Six o'Clock.  
 Books of the Words to be had at the above Places.

Plate 13: Advertisement for John Camidge's benefit, York, 1770 [YC 20 February 1770].

the Hudsons' wedding.<sup>50</sup> The two men played in a number of concerts in Wakefield during the 1760s for the benefit of the local organist there, Robert Jobson,<sup>51</sup> and a number of advertisements for other concerts outside York also list French horn concertos without naming soloists – Hudson and Thackray, the only known French horn players in the area, may also have performed in these.<sup>52</sup> From 1766, they also began holding their own annual benefits in York, usually in July; the first was performed at 'the Green without Bootham Bar'<sup>53</sup> but the later ones removed to the Assembly Rooms. Their benefits were held in conjunction with a third York musician, Joseph Shaw, a cellist (and a wait). Shaw also played in the spring benefits, performing cello concertos, and travelled with Hudson and Thackray to Wakefield and Leeds. Thackray also published a number of compositions, not for French horn but for guitar.<sup>54</sup>

The members of the band that accompanied these soloists are more obscure. It is likely that there was some amateur participation but nowhere is this explicitly stated; the only names that survive are those of professional musicians. The tradition of basing the band around the waits clearly continued and these men were augmented by musicians such as Thomas Thackray and John Barnard (whose existence is otherwise known only from brief entries in parish registers).<sup>55</sup> When the waits played at dancing assemblies, they were also augmented, probably by waits from other towns as in earlier years.<sup>56</sup> The average size of the band for these assemblies was about twelve,<sup>57</sup> but on occasion it was

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<sup>50</sup> Marriage Register of Holy Trinity Church, York, 23 November 1763. A man of the same name played at dancing assemblies in York from at least 1733 – this was probably the French horn player's father.

<sup>51</sup> YC 4 September 1764, 13 May 1766, 16 September 1766.

<sup>52</sup> e.g. *ibid.*, 10 October 1769.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 July 1766.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 January 1769, 21 January 1772, 17 March 1772, 4 August 1772.

<sup>55</sup> e.g. YRO M23:4 ARA 29 August 1763, 24 August 1767; Baptismal Registers of St. Michael le Belfrey, 3 January 1765, August 1766, 14 September 1767.

<sup>56</sup> e.g. YRO M23:4 ARA 28 August 1769.

<sup>57</sup> YRO M23:2 ARM 2 February 1764.

increased to fourteen.<sup>58</sup> There may have been some dissatisfaction with the quality of this band; in 1764 the Directors of the Assembly Rooms proposed to create a new band in conjunction with the Directors of the Musical Assembly:

Ordered that at a Meeting w<sup>th</sup> the Directors of the Musick Assembly that we will employ at the Assembly Rooms, such a band of Musick as they shall appoint; and as an Encouragement to get a good Band we will allow them 40<sup>s</sup> a year each, w<sup>ch</sup> is the same Salary the City Waits has & as good a livery besides the usual Salary.<sup>59</sup>

The plan was to create a band which would play at all venues and for all musical events throughout the city; the manager of the theatre was therefore also approached, inviting his participation in the scheme. His response was lukewarm:

Mr Baker the Master of the Playhouse being asked if he wou'd Encourage this new Band he gave for answer he wou'd at the same prices he now pays.<sup>60</sup>

Despite these consultations, the new band seems never to have come into existence. Any arrangement must in any case have been upset by a controversy in 1769. The waits were again accused of 'ill-Behaviour'<sup>61</sup> – Corporation records do not detail their offence. All the existing waits (including William Hudson) were dismissed; when a new set were appointed two months later, only one of those previously dismissed (not Hudson) retained his post. The Corporation minutes set out the duties and responsibilities of the waits with great care, particularly in regard to financial arrangements:

You shall be obedient to the Lord Mayor or his Deputy ... and shall attend and play upon such Musical Instruments as you are best Masters of in all Service of the Corporation when required by him or his Deputy. – You shall attend the Sheriffs of this City in their public Cavalcade to Read the proclamation over about Martinmas as also each Sheriff on the day he makes an Entertainment for the Lord Mayor and Aldermen for which Service you shall receive from each Sheriff one Guinea but if the Sheriffs ... require your further attendance for the Entertainment

<sup>58</sup> YRO M23:2 ARM 26 August 1769.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 2 February 1764.

<sup>60</sup> Idem.

<sup>61</sup> YRO B39 Vol. 44 YHB 4 December 1769.

of their friends ... then you shall be paid as such service may deserve. – You shall call the City from the first Monday after Martinmas to the end of ffebruary that is every Monday, Wednesday and ffriday in the Morning, (ffast Days and Christmas Week excepted).<sup>62</sup>

By the end of the 1760s, with the appointment of Frances Hudson as vocal soloist for the winter series, the personnel in York's concerts had become overwhelmingly locally based. The last refuge of the outside, often nationally-known, performer, was the Race Week. Race Week entertainments grew more and more ambitious in scale throughout the decade; the original single concert became two in 1763,<sup>63</sup> three in 1764,<sup>64</sup> four (evening) concerts by 1766,<sup>65</sup> and five (morning) concerts by 1767.<sup>66</sup> The Thursday concert was always a benefit for the leader; throughout this period, Felice Giardini continued to travel to the region to perform that role (with Noferi standing in for him for two years in the early years of the decade when Giardini was ill).<sup>67</sup> Giardini's presence was, as before, complemented by vocal soloists brought in from outside: Schmelling in 1763,<sup>68</sup> and two male singers – Giustinelli and Savoy – in 1772 and 1774 respectively.<sup>69</sup> Otherwise, visitors were rare in York at this period and those who did come were British performers, touring the provinces and putting on benefits where it seemed profitable. A Mr. Lambourn played on the Musical Glasses on a number of occasions in early 1763 before touring Ripon, Durham and Newcastle and returning for the Race Week in August;<sup>70</sup> 'Master Bromley', a pupil of Parry, the harp player, competed with Lambourn in Race Week, performing an instrumental programme every morning. Mr. Noel returned with another new instrument of his own invention,

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<sup>62</sup> YRO B39 Vol. 44 YHB 4 December 1769.

<sup>63</sup> YC 23 August 1763.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 21 August 1764.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 19 August 1766.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 11 August 1767.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 23 August 1763, 21 August 1764.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 23 August 1763.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 18 August 1772, 9 August 1774.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 1 March, 15 March, 9 August 1763.

the Pantaleon, in May 1770, and the fourteen-year old Miss Marshal (on piano forte and five stringed cello) held a benefit in January 1774 before moving on to Newcastle.<sup>71</sup> (Appendix 1)

### III: Development of supply services in York

York, like Newcastle, had long obtained musical supplies – strings, bows, bridges, music and so on – from stationers such as Alexander Staples.<sup>72</sup> Teachers and dancing masters sold instruments on an ad hoc basis; in 1755, for instance, James Nares offered for sale a new Chamber Organ.<sup>73</sup> Tickets for concerts were generally sold at the private houses of the participants, at coffee-houses and taverns, and at the Assembly Rooms after their establishment in the late 1720s. The first suggestion of a specialist music outlet in the city dates from the early 1740s. Thomas Oliver, a dancing master, operated what seems in effect to have been a shop, although it may not have been open continuously:

To be SOLD, *at very low Rates*, By Mr. THOMAS OLIVER, in Lady Pecket's Yard, in the Pavement, York, Several Musical Instruments made by the best Hands in London, viz. Harpsichords, Spinets, Violin, and Basses; with all Sorts of the best Strings for the same.<sup>74</sup>

Oliver also hired out musical instruments.

Thomas Haxby's shop in Blake Street, established in 1756, was certainly open continuously and was exclusively dedicated to the sale of musical goods. In the first years of business he advertised the shop – 'at the sign of the organ' – frequently; in addition to selling musical instruments and their accessories,<sup>75</sup> he offered 'every Musical

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<sup>71</sup> YC 1 May 1770, 11 January 1774. 'The PANTHALEON' takes its Name from the Inventor ... It has five complete Octaves, upwards of 200 Roman Strings, and is ten Feet long.'

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 18 July 1738.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 1 April 1755.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 4 August 1741.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 18 August 1761.

Work immediately after Publication<sup>76</sup> and almost every year took out a long advertisement for the latest London publications of ‘New Music’.<sup>77</sup> He sold tickets for local concerts<sup>78</sup> and accepted subscriptions for forthcoming musical works by local composers such as John Camidge and Edward Miller of Doncaster,<sup>79</sup> as well as publishing some works himself.<sup>80</sup> All his stock was available both to members of the musical profession and to private buyers – he offered both wholesale and retail terms.<sup>81</sup> By 1763, if not before, he was offering instruments of his own manufacture, for instance ‘New Barrels made to Box Organs, &c.’ as well as a repair service.<sup>82</sup>

Eight years after Haxby’s business was established, Joseph Shaw, the wait, opened another music shop ‘at the Sign of the Violin and Hautboy’, in Coney Street. He offered very similar services to Haxby; his advertisements suggest both retailing and manufacturing activities.<sup>83</sup> For the next few years, competition between the two businesses seems to have been considerable; both advertised frequently, often responding quickly to an advertisement by the other. From 1766, their activities seem to have diverged, with Haxby tending to concentrate more on the manufacture of instruments and Shaw apparently giving up or at least minimising his activities in this area. In that year, Haxby opened ‘a new Musical Instrument Warehouse next Door but one to his Music Shop in Blake-Street’ where his manufacturing activity was carried out.<sup>84</sup> A decrease in the number of occasions on which the two businesses were advertised may have been the result of this easing of competition.

The supplies Haxby and Shaw sold may have come directly from London or

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<sup>76</sup> YC., 3 January 1764.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 6 December 1763.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 10 February 1761.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 25 May 1762.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 26 November 1767.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 18 August 1761.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 1 March 1763.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 7 February 1764.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 19 August 1766.

been bought from visiting wholesale suppliers. Two of these visiting suppliers advertised in local papers. A Mr. Straube, who came to York in 1763, described himself as a '*Performer upon the Harpsichord, Arch-Lute and Guitar*' but the main purpose for his visit was to sell clavichords and guitars. He remained for a week only and his later destination is not known.<sup>85</sup> The second man may have been a regular visitor to the city: John Pillement who advertised himself as 'a foreign Merchant'.<sup>86</sup> He visited Newcastle in 1768 and York in 1772 and may have toured the country in much the same manner as performers such as Mr. Noel and Miss Marshall. In 1772 he claimed to have come directly from Italy and offered an extensive choice of goods:

a large Assortment of MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, viz. Italian Violins, new and old, of [fine] Quality; Tirola Violins, ditto; superfine Bases ...; Guittars, German Flutes, and Fifes; ... Bows of all Sorts; also a large Quantity of Roman Strings ... The above will be sold, wholesale and Retail.<sup>87</sup>

#### **IV: A passion for oratorios**

Surviving programmes in York at this period show the features typical of city concerts at an earlier period: short acts of irregular lengths with an unpredictable structure and a substantial emphasis on the solo concerto to the extent that some concerts included four concertos of various types. (Appendix 1) It should be stressed, however, that all the surviving programmes relate to benefit concerts and it is not possible to say whether this pattern was also typical of subscription concerts. All the earlier benefits fall clearly into the category of 'miscellaneous' concert, offering a variety of relatively short vocal and instrumental items. In 1769, however, this changed dramatically. The first benefits of

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<sup>85</sup> *YC* 27 December 1763.

<sup>86</sup> *NJ* 8-15 October 1768.

<sup>87</sup> *YC* 21 January 1772.



this year – those for the new vocal soloist, Frances Hudson and for Miles Coyle – adhered to the usual pattern,<sup>88</sup> but Camidge's benefit at the beginning of March broke the mould with an apparently complete performance of Boyce's *Solomon*; Camidge played an organ concerto at the end of the second part.<sup>89</sup> Camidge's benefit may have been a 'taster' for a series of oratorios performed in York just before Easter, a mere two weeks later; between 20 and 23 March, *Messiah* was performed twice and *Judas Maccabaeus* once by 'a Band of upwards of 100 Performers' led by Thomas Pinto, 'conductor of the Bands at Vauxhall and Drury-Lane'. Singers included Mrs Pinto (the former Charlotte Brent) and Thomas Norris of Oxford.<sup>90</sup>

The York benefits were the latest manifestation of a fashion which had begun in Wakefield a year and a half earlier and which lasted four or five hectic years. The Wakefield event in August 1767 consisted of performances of *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus* put on to celebrate the opening of the new organ there; musicians were drawn from a wide area including 'London, Oxford, Cambridge, York, Lincoln, Nottingham, Durham, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and the Parts adjacent'.<sup>91</sup> No oratorio performances are known in the Yorkshire area before this time, but after the Wakefield concerts a large number of performances were mounted. Three more sets of concerts were advertised in local papers for 1768, in Sheffield in late June/early July,<sup>92</sup> in Halifax in mid-August (a benefit for the local organist)<sup>93</sup> and during Doncaster Races in late September (performances directed by Edward Miller, the local organist).<sup>94</sup> The York performances in early 1769 then sparked off a prolonged burst of activity which over the next twelve months saw no less than eleven mini-festivals of oratorios and two

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<sup>88</sup> YC 17 January, 7 February 1769.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 21 February 1769.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 31 January 1769.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 21 July 1767.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 14 July 1768.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 16 August 1768.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 9 August 1768.

# O R A T O R I O S,

For the Benefit of the GENERAL INFIRMARY at LEEDS.

ON Thursday the 12th of October Inst. will be performed, in TRINITY-CHURCH, (where an Organ will be erected for that Purpose):

## The Oratorio of JUDAS MACCHABÆUS.

And on Friday the 13th,

## The Sacred Oratorio of the MESSIAH.

The Band will consist of the best Performers, Vocal and Instrumental, that can be procured; amongst which are Mrs. HUDSON from York; Miss RATCLIFFE; Mr. SAVILLER and Mr. WARREN, both from Litchfield; Mess. Jobson, Hudson, Shaw, Stoppord, Wilcox, &c. and the rest of the Performers are chiefly those who have performed at the Oratorios at York, Beverley, Wakefield, Halifax, Doncaster, Manchester, &c. The Chorusses to be accompanied with Trumpets, Horns, Kettle-Drums, &c.

The whole to be conducted By Mr. SAVILLER,

Trumpets by Mess. TINKER and TAVISS, from Manchester.

The First Violin by Mr. JOHNSON, from Wakefield.

The Organ by Mr. STOPPORD, Organist from Halifax.

TICKETS, at 4s. and 2s. each, to be had of Mr. BIRDS, Bookseller; Mr. MYERS, the New Inn; Mrs. COOKE, the Old King's Arms; Mr. ELL, the Golden Lion; Mr. WOOD, the Talbot; and of Mr. NORTHOUSE, the White Horse near the Church, in Leeds.

The Doors will be opened at Ten, and the Performance begin exactly at Eleven in the Forenoon.

The Tickets are transferable. No Money will be taken at the Door.

Books of the Words of the ORATORIOS, with Mr. Handel's Alterations and Additions, as they will be performed at Leeds, to be had of J. BINNS, Bookseller, at Threepence each.

\* \* There will be a BALL each Night.

individual concerts for a variety of purposes – to celebrate a new organ (Beverley, September 1769), for the benefit of an infirmary (Leeds, October 1769) and for personal benefits (Halifax, August 1769).<sup>95</sup> In 1770, all the benefits associated with the York subscription series took the form of oratorio performances and were followed for a second year by three oratorio performances in Lent. This frenzy of activity extended as far north as Durham and Thomas Ebdon's Easter Week oratorios, but did not reach Newcastle where concert life was in a confused state.<sup>96</sup> (Table 7.5, p. 146)

After mid-1770 activity seems to have tailed off. Three concerts put on to celebrate the new organ in St. Thomas's church in Liverpool in July 1770 were the only advertised oratorios in the latter half of the year,<sup>97</sup> and performances in 1771 were limited to the benefit concerts in York and Durham in the first three months of the year and three performances at East Retford in August.<sup>98</sup> By 1772, the York benefits had become miscellaneous concerts again and only Lent performances in Durham remained. No performances for 1773 are advertised and only an isolated event in Birmingham in September 1774.<sup>99</sup> No clear evidence remains to explain either the rise or decline of this fashion and it was never comprehensive; even at the height of its popularity, many benefits continued as miscellaneous concerts: for Robert Jobson in Wakefield for instance and for Thackray, Hudson and Shaw in York.<sup>100</sup> For individual musicians putting on a benefit, the high cost of oratorio performances may have been prohibitive.

The repertoire at these concerts was overwhelmingly Handelian and extremely limited, particularly at the beginning; between mid-1767 and mid-1769 only two works were performed – *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus* – with the exception of Camidge's

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<sup>95</sup> YC 25 July 1769, 22 August 1769, 19 September 1769.

<sup>96</sup> See Chapter 8.

<sup>97</sup> YC 31 July 1770.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 8 January, 29 January, 19 February 1771, 23 July 1771.

<sup>99</sup> YCh 23 September 1774.

<sup>100</sup> YC 12 September, 11 July 1769. See Appendix 1.

1769 benefit in York when Boyce's *Solomon* was put on.<sup>101</sup> Only in mid-1769 did more variety creep into the repertoire. In August, Mr. Stopford (organist at Halifax) put on a performance of *Samson* and a second concert that was an uneasy compromise between an oratorio performance and a miscellaneous concert – the *Dettingen Te Deum* and the Coronation Anthem were presented with 'several of the most celebrated pieces' from *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus*, making this concert the earliest example in the area of what was later known as a 'Concert of Sacred Music', in effect a concert of Handel's 'greatest hits'.<sup>102</sup> *Samson* was also put on in Beverley in late 1769 as well as the ubiquitous *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus*, and in September Edward Miller included *Acis and Galatea* in his series of concerts in Doncaster.<sup>103</sup> By 1770, *Judas Maccabaeus* had been abandoned and the lighter pieces in the genre were beginning to be favoured. The York benefits opted for *Acis and Galatea* (Mrs Hudson's benefit), *Alexander's Feast* (Coyle), and *The Royal Pastoral* by James Nares (for the benefit of his one-time pupil, John Camidge).<sup>104</sup> *Messiah* and *Samson* remained popular and the search for a little novelty produced performances of *Israel in Babylon* [sic] and *Resurrection*,<sup>105</sup> but overall the trend over the period was from a serious to a lighter tone with an increasing number of performances of shorter, less serious-minded works such as *Alexander's Feast*, *Acis and Galatea*, and Boyce's *Solomon*. (Table 7.5)

Some advertisements stress the size of the band; Miller in Doncaster estimated that his band (including both vocal and instrumental performers) would total eighty persons.<sup>106</sup> The following year (1769), the organisers of both the Lent oratorios in York

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<sup>101</sup> YC 21 February 1769.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 22 August 1769.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 5 September 1769.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 9 January 1770, 6 February 1770, 27 February 1770.

<sup>105</sup> Pasticcios consisting of extracts from other works, including oratorios and operas. See Griffiths, *A Musical Place*, p. 100.

<sup>106</sup> YC 9 August 1768.

**Table 7.5: Repertoire in oratorio concerts, 1769-1774**

(This table does not include oratorios performed in the normal course of subscription series in Durham.)

1767	Wakefield parish church	26 August	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
		27 August	<i>Messiah</i>
		28 August	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
1768	St Paul's Chapel, Sheffield	30 June	<i>Messiah</i>
		1 July	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
	Benefit for Mr. Stopford, Halifax	17 August	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
			<i>Messiah</i>
	Doncaster Races	20 September	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
		21 September	<i>Messiah</i>
1769	Camidge's benefit, York	3 March	<i>Solomon</i> (Boyce)
	Lent oratorios, York	20 March	<i>Messiah</i>
		21 March	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
		22 March	<i>Messiah</i>
	Durham	27 March	<i>Messiah</i>
	St Paul's Chapel, Sheffield	7 June	<i>Messiah</i>
		8 June	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
	Tadcaster	6 July	<i>Messiah</i>
		7 July	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
	Stopford's benefit, Halifax	30 August	<i>Dettingen Te Deum</i> and extracts from <i>Messiah</i> and <i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
		31 August	<i>Samson</i>
	Beverley	20 September	<i>Messiah</i>
		21 September	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
		22 September	<i>Samson</i>
	Doncaster	27 September	Vocal and Instrumental - <i>Funeral music for Queen Caroline, Elegy on death of Handel</i>
		28 September	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
		29 September	Concerto Spirituale
	Leeds	12 October	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
		13 October	<i>Messiah</i>
1770	Mrs Hudson's benefit, York	26 January	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
	Coyle's benefit, York	16 February	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
	Camidge's benefit, York	9 March	<i>Royal Pastoral</i> (Nares)
	Musick Assembly benefit, York	30 March	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
	Lent oratorios, York	9 April	<i>Samson</i>
		10 April	<i>Israel in Babylon</i>
		11 April	<i>Messiah</i>
	Durham	16 April	<i>Messiah</i>
	Liverpool	7 August	<i>Messiah</i>
		9 August	<i>Samson</i>
		10 August	<i>Resurrection</i>

1771	Mrs Hudson's benefit, York	18 January	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
	Coyle's benefit, York	8 February	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
	Camidge's benefit, York	1 March	<i>Solomon</i> (Boyce)
	Durham	1 April	<i>Messiah</i>
	East Retford	5 August	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
		6 August	<i>Messiah</i> (am)
			<i>Acis and Galatea</i> (pm)
1772	Durham	21 April	<i>Messiah</i>
1774	Birmingham	14 September	<i>Dettingen Te Deum</i> and <i>Jubilate</i> , Coronation Anthem (am)
			<i>Alexander's Feast</i> (pm)
		15 September	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i> (am)
			Miscellaneous (pm)
		16 September	<i>Messiah</i>

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and the Tadcaster oratorio series anticipated one hundred performers.<sup>107</sup> These were a mixture of local and nationally known figures. All the large-scale performances (that is, excluding the subscription concert benefits in York and the Lent oratorios in Durham) used the Lancashire Chapel Singers as chorus singers; the instrumental players were almost always local musicians – advertisements frequently list players from Manchester, York, Wakefield, Nottingham, Lincoln, Grantham, Halifax and Hull. A number of local men established a special expertise in these oratorio performances, travelling extensively to take part and thereby establishing a far-flung network of musicians across the area. Amongst the men known to have taken part in oratorio performances on a regular basis were Robert Jobson of Wakefield (later of Leeds),<sup>108</sup> Mr. Shaw junior of York,<sup>109</sup> Mr. Stopford, organist of Halifax,<sup>110</sup> Messrs Tinker and Traviss, trumpeters from Manchester,<sup>111</sup> Edward Miller of Doncaster,<sup>112</sup> John Camidge,<sup>113</sup> and Thomas Haigh, owner of a music shop in Halifax.<sup>114</sup> The role of the leader of the band was most

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<sup>107</sup> YC 17 January, 13 June 1769.

<sup>108</sup> e.g. YC 23 May 1769.

<sup>109</sup> See Chapter 11.

<sup>110</sup> YC 10 October 1769.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 22 August 1769.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 23 July 1769.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 13 June 1769.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 22 August 1769.

frequently assumed by Robert Jobson of Wakefield,<sup>115</sup> although John Camidge led the band at Tadcaster in July 1769<sup>116</sup> – his only known appearance as a leader, apart from one occasion in the York theatre.<sup>117</sup> Felice Giardini was hired as leader for the Beverley oratorios, but this may have been a lucky chance for the organisers; Giardini was already in the area for his annual visit to the York Race Week concerts.<sup>118</sup>

Vocal soloists were given far more prominence in advertisements, although it was not until early 1769 that singers of any notability were used, earlier performances relying on local resources. The organisers of the York Lent oratorios of 1769 then imported Thomas Pinto and his wife, to respectively lead the orchestra and to sing,<sup>119</sup> and also hired Thomas Norris, the well-known tenor from Oxford. All three returned to the area later, the Pintos performing at the Liverpool oratorios in July 1770<sup>120</sup> and Norris and his Oxford colleague, William Matthews, singing in Beverley in 1769 and in York and Liverpool in 1770.<sup>121</sup> Also popular as singers were Messrs. Saville and Warren, singing men from Lichfield Cathedral, who appeared at three festivals in 1769.<sup>122</sup> Frances Hudson was also called upon to sing at these concerts, reflecting her increasing popularity. Her first appearance outside York seems to have been in Tadcaster<sup>123</sup> and she rapidly extended her activities – by 1771 she was apologising to the subscribers of the York Concerts for being absent singing in ‘Mr. Arnold’s Oratorios in London, during the Lent Season’.<sup>124</sup> By far the most prominent of the invited vocal soloists was the

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<sup>115</sup> e.g. at Sheffield: *YC* 23 May 1769.

<sup>116</sup> *YC* 13 June 1769.

<sup>117</sup> See Chapter 12.

<sup>118</sup> *YC* 22 August 1769.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 January 1769.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 July 1770.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 August 1769. It is not clear whether this was the same Matthews as at Durham Cathedral.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 May, 13 June, 19 September 1769.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 June 1769.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 December 1771. Oratorio seasons in Lent ran almost continuously in London from Handel’s day, with rival series being put on by English composers such as Arne and Arnold in the late 1760s and 1770s; it is at Arne’s oratorios that Frances Hudson sang in 1771. It is not clear what sparked the fashion for oratorios in Lancashire/Yorkshire at this particular time and whether Mrs. Hudson’s connection with Arne influenced it in any way [McVeigh, *Concert Life*, pp. 28-9].

castrato, Tenducci, who was hired for the York Lent oratorios of 1770.<sup>125</sup> Both the York benefits and the Durham Lent oratorios, however, seem to have been put on using only the local performers usually available to them.

The fashion for oratorio performances at this period clearly extended across the Lancashire/Yorkshire corridor and as far north as Durham; equally clearly, it built on such well-founded traditions such as the Three Choirs Festivals. How widely this fashion spread, however, is not at present possible to assess nor is it clear why it so rapidly declined. Only in Durham did the habit of putting on a complete (or nearly complete) oratorio performance linger to any great extent and in that city it was a custom that had long been established, reflecting both a personal preference on the part of the performers and organisers there and a repertoire that was particularly suited to the musical forces available. In view of the influence which the Dean and the prebendaries had upon concerts (both public and private) in the city, and the aristocratic origins of these men, it is interesting to speculate that the prolonged and consistent preference for Handel's works was, at least in part, an early manifestation of the political interests that so influenced the supporters of the Handel Commemorations held in London from 1784.

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<sup>125</sup> YC 13 March 1770. For further details about oratorio performances in Yorkshire at this period, see B.W. Pritchard, *The musical festival and the choral society in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: a social history*, PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1968.



# 8

## PROSPECTIVE HEIRS: NEWCASTLE AFTER THE DEATH OF CHARLES

### AVISON

#### **I: The actress and the dancing masters**

In May 1770, the musical situation in Newcastle was changed dramatically by the death of Charles Avison.<sup>1</sup> Avison was sixty-one years old and had been pre-eminent in Newcastle's musical life for thirty-five years. He had earned sufficient money to feel able to describe himself at the time of his wife's death in 1766 as 'gentleman',<sup>2</sup> a term generally used to signify someone who had retired from business and was living on an annuity; although Avison clearly continued in his profession in the last years of his life, he may have been living off invested income.

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<sup>1</sup> NC 12 May 1770.

<sup>2</sup> Burial Registers of St Andrew's Church, Newcastle, 17 October 1766.

At first consideration, Avison's death seems to have made little practical difference to the functioning of musical activities in Newcastle. His place as organist of St. Nicholas's church was taken by his elder surviving son, Edward, who was twenty-three years old; the absence of any formal notice of appointment for Edward in Corporation minutes suggests that he may already have been acting as his father's deputy. Edward's musical talent had apparently manifested itself at an early age. At the age of thirteen he had impressed his father's old teacher, the composer Geminiani, with his performance on the harpsichord, according at least to an anonymous letter written to the *Newcastle Journal*:

... [Geminiani was] so much delighted with the Performance of Mr. Avison's eldest Son upon the Harpsichord, (a Boy 13 Years old) that he took him in his Arms with an Earnestness which affected them both. Then turning to his Father, he said, 'My Friend, I love all your Productions. You are my Heir. This boy will be yours. Take Care of him. To raise up Geniuses like him, is the only way to perpetuate Music.'<sup>3</sup>

Edward also took over as organiser of the regular yearly concerts. In 1770 he organised Race and Assize Week concerts<sup>4</sup> and the winter subscription concerts, which began on 4 October on the same terms as in his father's day: one guinea for fourteen nights, or 15s. for twelve.<sup>5</sup> But behind this apparently uneventful takeover was a conflict, the full extent of which will probably never be clear and which is known only from a single letter to the *Newcastle Courant*. The unfortunate addressee of the letter seems to have been John Garth, but others were also clearly considered to be at fault. Garth seems to have offended Charles Avison's supporters:

A CARD.

PHILO-MUSICUS presents his compliments to Mr. G—th, and desires to know if he thinks he hath cancelled every obligation he owed to the late worthy and ingenious Mr. Avison, by playing at his concerts for which he received an adequate reward. It would give Philo-Musicus unspeakable pleasure to see Mr. G. and

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<sup>3</sup> NC 15 November 1760.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 23 June, 18 August 1770.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 22 September 1770.

others who excell in that elegant and divine Art, of more harmonious and heavenly dispositions; from their behaviour one would imagine that it must cost them some trouble to confine their music to their heads and fingers, terribly afraid lest it should reach their hearts, and humanize their selfish souls.<sup>6</sup>

Garth's offence may have been to withdraw from the Newcastle concerts on his friend's death; it was about this time that he was withdrawing from concert-promotion and playing in Durham, and he may have wished to concentrate more on teaching. He did not publicly respond to his attacker.

Despite the existence of an obvious musical heir, a number of people seem to have considered it worthwhile trying to establish themselves in the city in the years following Avison's death. The first six years of the decade saw a much larger number and variety of concerts promoted in the city than in the previous years, as if Avison's death had suddenly released a surge of activity. Even two isolated concerts given by musicians from Edinburgh – a concert by a Mrs. Woodman on 29 August 1770,<sup>7</sup> and another by 'Sig. Arrigoni and Mr. Techclinburg from the concert at Edinburgh' in September 1771<sup>8</sup> – may have been testing the water in this way, although these were more likely visitors giving concerts in the course of a journey between Edinburgh and London. (Table 8.1, p. 153)

In the early part of 1771, an actress, Mrs. Taylor, enjoyed a brief season of prominence, holding a benefit on 9 March and then appearing as vocal soloist in a number of concerts.<sup>9</sup> Her March concert is the first known musical (rather than theatrical) benefit for an actor in Newcastle. Mrs. Taylor's prominence was inevitably short-lived in view of the theatre company's temporary residence in the city and she did not return the following year. A more unexpected concert-promoter in 1771 was Mr. Campioni, a dancing master, who arranged a Race Week concert in competition with

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<sup>6</sup> *NJ* 25 August-1 September 1770.

<sup>7</sup> *NCh* 25 August 1770.

<sup>8</sup> *NJ* 24-31 August 1771.

<sup>9</sup> *NC* 9 March 1771.

**Table 8.1: Concerts in Newcastle, 1770-1776**

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1770	1 February	benefit for Evance and Meredith	singing men, Durham
	27 June	Race Week (Edward Avison)	
	22 August	Assize Week (Edward Avison)	
	29 August	concert for Mrs Woodman	visitor
	4 October	first subscription concert (E. Avison)	
1771	19 March	benefit for Mrs Taylor	actress
	18 April	benefit for Charles Avison	
	26 June	Race Week (E. Avison)	
	June	Colacione (Mr. Campioni)	dancing master
	29 July	Assize Week (E. Avison)	
	3 September	benefit for Arrigoni and Techclinburg	visitors
1772	30 April	benefit for Charles Avison	
	24 June	Race Week (E. Avison)	
	15 August	Assize Week (E. Avison)	
	18 August	Assize Week (E. Avison)	
	20 August	benefit for William Paxton	singing man
	8 October	first subscription concert (E. Avison)	
1773	22 April	benefit for Charles Avison	
	Race Week	benefit for Mr. Hogg	dancing master
	23 June	Race Week (E. Avison)	
	9 August	Assize Week benefit for Noferi	leader of band
	10 August	Assize Week (E. Avison)	
	7 October	first subscription concert (E. Avison)	
1774	12 March	benefit for Miss Marshall	visitor
	22 March	benefit for Miss Marshall	
	12 April	benefit for Mr Lloyd (harpist)	visitor
	21 April	benefit for Charles Avison	
	3 May	benefit for Robert Barber	
	19 May	benefit for Charles Avison	
	22 June	Race Week (E. Avison)	
	2 August	Assize Week (E. Avison)	
	6 October	first subscription concert (E. Avison)	
1775	21 June	benefit for John Simpson	
	15 August	Assize Week (E. Avison)	
1776	19 February	Vocal and Instrumental concert (E. Avison)	
	6 August	Assize Week (E. Avison)	

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Edward Avison's established event. Avison's concert was as usual on the Wednesday evening of Race Week;<sup>10</sup> his competitor's on Tuesday morning at 10 am. had the advantage of novelty, being a breakfast concert. Campioni claimed his inspiration from Italy, but breakfast concerts had been popular in public gardens in London, albeit twenty years before:<sup>11</sup>

*On Tuesday morning at ten o'clock in the Race Week, will be performed, At Mr. PARKER's LONG-ROOM, A CONCERT, OF VOCAL and INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC. At which time and place will be provided for the entertainment of the Ladies and Gentlemen, a COLACIONE, or a Breakfast in the Italian manner, decorated and set out in a taste quite new and curious, as well as genteel and elegant.*<sup>12</sup>

Campioni offered songs by Mrs. Taylor in his concert and stated that he 'will do himself the honour of exhibiting in such dances as the Ladies and Gentlemen shall require'.<sup>13</sup> He had set up a dancing-school in Newcastle in September 1770, claiming that he was from the Opera House in the Haymarket, London,<sup>14</sup> and in March 1771 had given two public performances of dances to advertise the reopening of his school.<sup>15</sup> The Race Week concert may have been intended to serve the same purpose. Campioni, like most dancing masters, was peripatetic; he did not remain in Newcastle after his concert or return in later years, which suggests that he may not have found the city profitable. A second dancing master, Mr. Hogg (who generally taught at such places as Durham, Tynemouth, and North Shields),<sup>16</sup> also attempted a concert in Newcastle the following year (1772),<sup>17</sup> but likewise did not repeat the experiment. No greater success came the way of a much more experienced concert-promoter, William Paxton, the Durham

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<sup>10</sup> NC 22 June 1771.

<sup>11</sup> McVeigh, *Concert Life*, p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> NC 15 June 1771.

<sup>13</sup> Idem.

<sup>14</sup> NCh 22 September 1770.

<sup>15</sup> NC 9 March, 20 March 1771.

<sup>16</sup> e. g. NCh 2 July 1774.

<sup>17</sup> NC 5 June 1773.

singing man. Paxton had held a number of Race Week concerts in Durham in the early 1760s in competition with Garth<sup>18</sup> and for the Newcastle concert enlisted the help of his brother Stephen, once a chorister of the Cathedral and now established in London,<sup>19</sup> as well as Giovanni Noferi and an up-and-coming bass singer, Edward Meredith.<sup>20</sup> Like the dancing masters, Paxton never attempted another concert in the city. He was by now aging and it is possible that he was no longer the distinguished singer he had been. It is significant, however, that the other singing men who had recently held a benefit in Newcastle (just before Charles Avison's death), John Matthews and William Evance, also did not return, even though Matthews had the advantage of already being known to Newcastle music-lovers as a soloist in the Spring Gardens. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that none of these men found concert-promotion in Newcastle a profitable venture.

## II: Native sons

Three years after Avison's death, a native of the city, Robert Barber, made a more prolonged attempt to establish himself in Newcastle. The Barbers were well-known tradesmen in the city; Joseph Barber, Robert's father, had originally set himself up on the Sandhill close to the Quayside in the late 1730s, describing himself as a 'rolling press printer'<sup>21</sup> and 'a Music and Copper-Plate printer'.<sup>22</sup> His music-printing activities seem to have been abandoned at a relatively early date and by 1756 he was describing himself as a 'bookseller'. He also operated a circulating library.<sup>23</sup> He continued to sell music, although he no longer printed it, and advertised both books and instruments with

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<sup>18</sup> See Brian Crosby, 'Stephen and other Paxtons' for details of Stephen's career.

<sup>19</sup> CA TA passim.

<sup>20</sup> NC 15 August 1776.

<sup>21</sup> NCh 7 July 1739.

<sup>22</sup> NC 25 April-2 May 1741.

<sup>23</sup> NJ 2-9 October 1756.

discounts for music teachers and dealers.<sup>24</sup> Barber's shop, later moved to Amen Corner behind St. Nicholas's Church, seems to have been the first in Newcastle to deal extensively in musical goods and he did not encounter opposition until 1757 when John Hawthorn, a watch-maker, also started to deal in musical instruments.<sup>25</sup> Both Barber and Hawthorn regularly sold tickets for concerts.

In June 1773, Joseph's elder son, Robert, returned from a trip to London whose purpose is not clear but which may have been undertaken for musical reasons. Robert took over the music-selling side of his father's business, moving it a short distance to a shop at the corner of the Wool Market;<sup>26</sup> the rest of his father's business remained at Amen Corner. (Appendix 8) Robert's shop was apparently devoted to musical goods only, which makes it the first known specialist music shop in the city. At the same time, he set himself up as a teacher of organ, harpsichord and violin, and as a tuner;<sup>27</sup> he also made an early appearance as a performer, playing one of his own harpsichord concertos at Hogg's concert in Assize Week 1773.<sup>28</sup> In January 1774, he advertised the forthcoming publication of 'SIX SONATAS for the PIANO FORTE or HARPSICHORD, with an Accompaniment for a Violin and Violoncello' and advertised for an apprentice, which suggests that he intended to stay in the city.<sup>29</sup> In late April he thanked local people for 'the extraordinary encouragement he hath received from them since his commencement in business' and announced a benefit concert to be held on 3 May.<sup>30</sup> The concert offered no less than seven items in each half, with Barber's own compositions on harpsichord and German flute, extensive extracts from *Messiah*, sung by 'a Gentleman of the Durham Choir', and a cello solo played by George Ashton from

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<sup>24</sup> *NJ* 2-9 October 1756.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-8 January 1757.

<sup>26</sup> *NC* 19 June 1773.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>28</sup> *NC* 5 June 1773.

<sup>29</sup> *NJ* 22 January 1774.

<sup>30</sup> *NC* 30 April 1774.

Durham. Barber may have become acquainted with Ashton when they had both performed in Hogg's concert the previous year; the vagueness of the reference to 'a Gentleman of the Durham Choir' suggests that Ashton might have promised to bring a suitable singer with him, with whom Barber was not personally acquainted at the time of the advertisement. Other composers whose works were played included Noferi, Abel, Schwindel, Kammel, Eichner and Geminiani – an overwhelmingly modern programme.<sup>31</sup> (Appendix 1)

The use of several 'guest' soloists and of horns and oboes (probably obtained from one of the regiments quartered locally) may have made the concert expensive to put on. Barber, like Campioni, Hogg and Paxton before him, did not attempt another. Despite his reference to 'extraordinary encouragement', he did not remain in Newcastle; in November 1774, he applied for and obtained the post of organist at St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel in Aberdeen.<sup>32</sup> His music-selling business seems to have passed back to his father Joseph in Amen Corner.<sup>33</sup>

Only one musician other than Edward Avison seems to have had any success at holding concerts in Newcastle at this period – Edward's younger brother Charles. Charles had made his first known public performance at Matthews's benefit in Durham in 1769 at the age of eighteen, but it is possible that he had appeared in his father's concerts before this date – he had certainly been active in Moore's Music Club at the Sun Inn. From at least the time of his father's death he was organist of St. John's Church, earning a salary of £20 per annum.<sup>34</sup> As in his brother's case, no record survives of his appointment to this post, which was officially his father's, and he may previously have acted as his father's deputy. In April 1771, almost a year after his

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<sup>31</sup> NC 30 April 1774.

<sup>32</sup> Aberdeen Music Society minute book, 5 November 1774, quoted in David Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London, Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 55.

<sup>33</sup> NC 19 August 1775.

<sup>34</sup> TAWS 543/128 CAN, *passim*.



father's death, Charles put on his first benefit concert;<sup>35</sup> he held at least one benefit every year for the next three years, organising a total of five. Programmes for three of these survive; two – those of 1771 and 1772 – are unusual in consisting of three short (four-item) acts.<sup>36</sup> (Appendix 1) The concerts are however conventional in their alternation of vocal and instrumental items, and their most distinctive feature is their extensive use of local soloists and works by local composers. Harpsichord concertos and lessons were probably written and performed by Charles Avison junior but the 'concerto for violins' played in all three concerts must surely refer to the father's music. (Ex. 8.1)

**Ex. 8.1: Benefit concert for Charles Avison, jnr., 30 April 1772**

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	Composer	Performer
ACT I		
Overture 3d. with horns	Abel	
Song 'Beneath a green shade', with horns	Dav. Rizzio	
Harpsichord sonata	Garth	
Concerto 5 <sup>th</sup> , for violins	Geminiani Corelli	
ACT II		
Periodical Overture 7th, with horns	Stamitz	
Song		
Solo violin	Giardini	Mr. J. Walker
Concerto for violins	Avison	
ACT III		
Overture, <i>Pastor Fido</i>	Handel	
Harpsichord Lesson	Avison	
Concerto Hautboy		Mr. Shadforth
Periodical Overture 3d, with horns	Stamitz	

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Garth was represented by his keyboard music and William Shield, another local composer based in London, by several songs.<sup>37</sup> A number of local musicians played

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<sup>35</sup> NC 13 April 1771.

<sup>36</sup> Only two other concerts of three acts are known in Newcastle, one in 1777 and another to celebrate a short-lived peace in 1802.

<sup>37</sup> Shield, a pupil of Charles Avison snr., had played violin throughout the North-East, chiefly with travelling theatre companies before being advised (allegedly by Felice Giardini) to try his luck in London. The story of his being apprenticed to a boat-builder is probably apocryphal and, contrary to general belief, his mother did not die when he was young but survived until 1804 [NCh 18 August 1804].

solo items – men who are shadowy figures, almost undocumented during Charles Avison snr.'s time and very little known after it. Waits were included: Mr. Newby on the cello, Mr. Walker on the violin and Mr. Shadforth (also organist of Gateshead) on the oboe. Avison's vocal soloists were actresses and actors from the local theatre company – Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Bogle, as well as the local favourite Mr. Jeffreys. Particularly noticeable is the absence of any input by Durham Cathedral musicians – there is no record of Charles ever using them in his concerts and his brother Edward is only known to have employed them twice, in the last year of his life (1776).<sup>38</sup>

As Charles Avison jnr. held a benefit concert in four successive years, it would appear that the concerts were, initially at least, moderately profitable. In 1774, however, the situation changed; only one month after his benefit in April, Charles held a second benefit on 19 May.<sup>39</sup> This unprecedented rapidity in holding a second benefit so hard upon the heels of a first suggests that the profits from the first had been small or non-existent. In 1775, he seems to have held no benefit at all (although newspaper records in this year are far from complete) and in 1776, at about the time he usually held the benefit, he applied to his employers at St. John's Church, the Corporation, for permission to travel. He was not planning the usual trip to London but something much more adventurous:

Upon the petition of Charles Avison, Organist of St. John's it is ordered that he be permitted to be absent one year to go into foreign parts for his improvement and that his salary due in his absence be paid to his brother, Edward Avison, provided he procure the duty or organist at the said church to be duly performed by a proper person to be paid for the same out of the said salary.<sup>40</sup>

Charles ventured as far as St. Petersburg, making him one of the most extensively travelled of Newcastle musicians. From the Russian capital he wrote in April 1777

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<sup>38</sup> *NC* 24 February, 3 August 1776.

<sup>39</sup> *NCh* 16 April, 14 May 1774.

<sup>40</sup> *TAWs* Co. Co. 15 April 1776.

asking for a further four months leave;<sup>41</sup> this was granted, but in September of the same year he was still in Russia and sent in his resignation as organist of St. John's.<sup>42</sup> He did not return to Newcastle until around December 1779.<sup>43</sup>

One other local musician held a benefit during this period, in mid-1775. John Simpson, the new organist of Gateshead, held a benefit of two short acts including the music of Abel, Corelli, Handel and Romanino as well as music by 'Avison', probably Charles jnr. rather than snr.<sup>44</sup> (Appendix 1) He did not hold another. Throughout the rest of 1775 and the whole of 1776 the only concerts in Newcastle were the regular events of the city's musical life – Race and Assize Week concerts and the winter subscription series – run by Edward Avison.

Edward was the only musician at this period not to advertise full programmes for his concerts. His father's failure to advertise more than time, place and cost of his concerts suggests that he expected his audiences to know exactly what they would hear; Edward's similar practice suggests that he did not substantially alter the format or repertoire of the concerts. Only once did he advertise programmes – for his Race and Assize Week concerts in 1773. Both were surprisingly short, having four items only in each half; most of the items were unattributed to composers. Only one song appeared in each half. Harpsichord sonatas were probably played by Edward's brother Charles, and the second concert was led by Noferi, who also played solo pieces. The Band belonging to the 67th Regiment also appeared and at least one actress, Mrs. Bogle, sang vocal parts. (Appendix 1)

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<sup>41</sup> TAWS Co. Co. 7 April 1777.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 25 September 1777.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 24 December 1779.

<sup>44</sup> NC 17 June 1775.

### III: Durham musicians

The limited role played by Durham musicians in concerts in Newcastle after Avison's death is surprising, in view of the fact that Thomas Ebdon was at this time expanding his concert-giving activities outside Durham. His chief area of interest was Sunderland. Concert life in Sunderland had apparently been slight since Herschel's departure early in the 1760s; no concert had been advertised in local papers since 1762. Ebdon's connection with the town seems to have begun in April 1769 with the opening of St. John's Chapel when 'Cathedral Service and proper Anthems will be performed ... by the Gentlemen of the Choir of Durham'.<sup>45</sup> Ebdon played the organ at this service (which was received 'with great applause')<sup>46</sup> and seems to have perceived a ready market for music in the town. In June 1770, he tested the waters by putting on a performance of Boyce's *Solomon*<sup>47</sup> and in 1772 ran a short subscription series of six fortnightly concerts from February to April.<sup>48</sup> By the 1774-5 season, the series was held more conventionally between October and March, with one concert around the middle of each month.<sup>49</sup> Ebdon may have had only the musical direction of this series and left the financial and organisational elements to local men, possibly belonging to the Sunderland Musical Society or a group of other gentlemen; the advertisement for the 1774 series refers to 'the Stewards', a group of local men including a doctor and a sea captain.<sup>50</sup> Ebdon continued to hold an annual personal benefit in the town; in 1779 he moved this to 4 June to celebrate the King's birthday and it remained on this day until almost the end of the century, despite later changes in promoter.<sup>51</sup> An additional concert, put on

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<sup>45</sup> *NCh* 1 April 1769.

<sup>46</sup> *NC* 15 April 1769.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 June 1770.

<sup>48</sup> *NC* 8 February 1772.

<sup>49</sup> *NCh* 13 October 1774.

<sup>50</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>51</sup> *NCh* 29 May 1779.

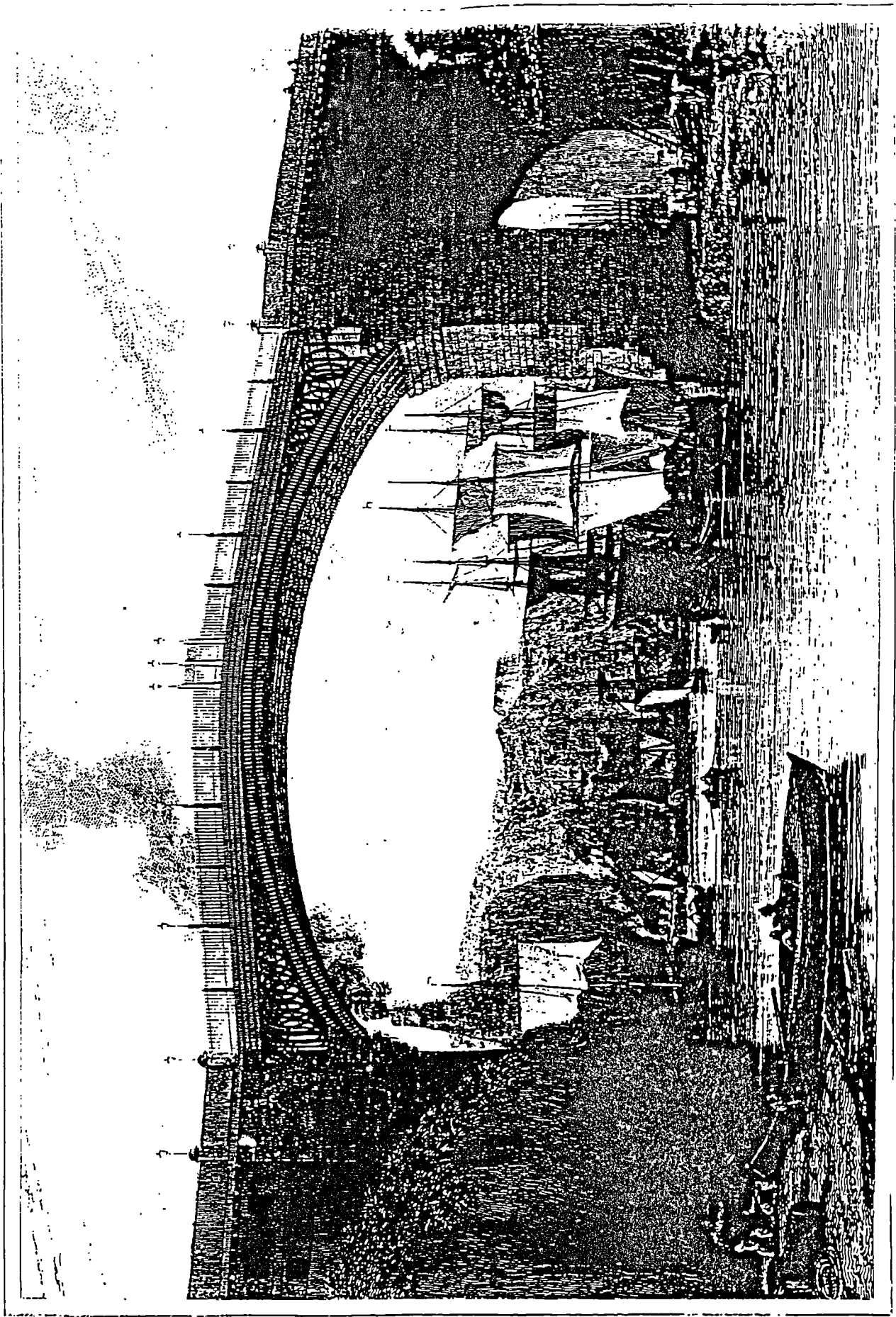


Plate 15: The Iron Bridge at Sunderland (engraving by E. More).

every year from 1776 by the new organist of St. John's Church, George Goodchild, was evidently no less popular.

In Durham itself, musical activity seems to have been relatively low-key during the 1770s. Visitors to the city were rare; records survive of only one concert given by non-Cathedral personnel at this time – a concert given on 28 March 1780 by the Huntingdon Band who may have been quartered locally.<sup>52</sup> After John Garth's withdrawal from concert promotion, Thomas Ebdon continued to hold Race and Assize Week concerts, often hiring, as had Garth, Noferi as leader for many of the concerts.<sup>53</sup> Noferi also appeared as leader in the opening concert of the 1778-9 subscription series.<sup>54</sup> These subscription series were not advertised in Durham between 1772 and 1778, although there is no reason to believe that they did not take place. In 1772 the subscription cost half a guinea for twelve concerts;<sup>55</sup> the next information available, in 1778, shows that the price had remained stable but that the number of concerts had fallen to eight.<sup>56</sup> The price and number of concerts then seems to have remained constant throughout the next decade. Although some concerts continued to be held in the Long Room of the Red Lion, most of the known concerts in Durham during the 1770s took place in Ebdon's own rooms. Ebdon rented a house in the North Bailey from the Dean and Chapter and had added, or adapted, a room attached to it. The only remaining description of this room dates from 1790 when an advertisement in the *Newcastle Courant* offered for sale:

All that commodius and desirable dwelling-house, situated in the North Bailey in Durham, with the large Assembly Room thereto adjoining, and three Glass Chandeliers, now in the occupation of Mr. Ebdon, Organist ...<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> NC 25 March 1780.

<sup>53</sup> e.g. *ibid.*, 5 August 1775.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 October 1778.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 September 1772.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 September 1778.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 November 1790.

Few indications of repertoire appear in the newspaper publicity for these series but it is clear that the concerts were still dominated by vocal music, particularly oratorios by Handel. The 1778-9 season, for instance, began with *Alexander's Feast* and ended with *Acis and Galatea*.<sup>58</sup> The fashion for oratorio performances, which had subsided in Lancashire and Yorkshire in the 1770s, was still thriving in Durham.

The singer of *Polypheme* in the latter concert was a singing man who had newly arrived at the Cathedral, although he was not unknown to North-Eastern audiences. Edward Meredith is described by Simon McVeigh as a singer 'plucked from total obscurity'; Sir Watkin Williams Wynn (later one of the patrons of the Concert of Ancient Music) had allegedly heard Meredith singing in a cooper's workshop and offered to pay for his musical education.<sup>59</sup> Meredith, a bass, sang in Wiliam Paxton's sole attempt at a benefit in Newcastle (1772) and returned in 1778 for a further series of concerts.<sup>60</sup> His abilities impressed the Dean and Chapter at Durham; in November 1778, they took the unprecedented step of offering Meredith a job which did not yet exist, agreeing that he should have the next available post at a salary of £50 per annum. This left Meredith in the uncomfortable position of waiting for one of the singing men to die (singing men were appointed for life); in early 1779, Cuthbert Brass obliged and Meredith was sworn in officially four months later, taking part in one of Ebdon's concerts only two weeks after that.<sup>61</sup> Meredith may have been resident in Durham throughout this period, possibly acting as a deputy in the choir.

His appointment underlined and accelerated a steady change in the character of the singing men as a body. In the earlier part of the century the Gentlemen of the Choir, no matter how well-paid and respected, were part-time musicians; even Jasper Clarke, the most highly paid singer of the 1750s and a frequent and much-praised singer in the

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<sup>58</sup> NC 26 September 1778, 6 February 1779.

<sup>59</sup> McVeigh, *Concert Life*, p. 188.

<sup>60</sup> NC 12 September 1778.

<sup>61</sup> CA DAB 1 February 1779.

Dean's public and private concerts,<sup>62</sup> had supplemented his earnings with a job as a barber.<sup>63</sup> As the century progressed, this status changed; it became more unusual for singing men to obtain money from a non-musical source. The practice never completely died out; John Marshall was described at his death in 1782 as a watchmaker,<sup>64</sup> and Robert Robinson, who died in 1795 after only three years as a singing man, was an upholsterer.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, a substantial core of the best-known singing men in the last third of the century clearly derived all their income from musical sources: from their salary as singing men, from teaching and from concert performance. Meredith was the prime example of this; others included Meredith's frequent singing partner, William Evance (probably a counter-tenor), the cellist George Ashton, and the leader of Ebdon's band, the violinist Thomas Robinson. Both local men (Ashton and Robinson) and imported singers (Meredith and Evance) were represented in this very active core of musicians; in the 1780s, these four were to become ubiquitous at concerts throughout the North-East region.

#### IV: The pupil

The flurry of activity in the four years following Charles Avison's death suggests that a market for public concerts was thought to exist in Newcastle, but that if it did, it was not sufficiently large to support more than one regular concert-promoter; Thomas Ebdon may have appreciated this and chosen to look to Sunderland as a more profitable market. Edward Avison emerged as his father's natural heir. His health was uncertain, however, and by 1776 he was suffering from a long debilitating illness. After the Assize Concert of that year, at which William Evance sang the vocal parts, no attempt was made to put

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<sup>62</sup> Diary of G. W. Harris, *passim*.

<sup>63</sup> CA TA 1755-6 *passim*.

<sup>64</sup> NC 6 July 1782.

<sup>65</sup> NA 11 July 1795.



on a winter subscription series and Edward seems to have succumbed to the disease. On 16 October he died; the *Newcastle Courant* remarked that ‘he bore a tedious illness with great resignation’.<sup>66</sup> Two months later, the Corporation elected to Edward’s post as organist of St. Nicholas his father’s old pupil, Matthias Hawdon; with his appointment, Hawdon also ‘inherited’ the role of chief concert-promoter in Newcastle.<sup>67</sup>

Hawdon’s origins are unclear but he was almost certainly a Newcastle man; his brother was long established in the city as a surgeon.<sup>68</sup> He owed at least some of his early success to his teacher’s influence – Avison recommended him for what appears to have been his first appointment at Holy Trinity, Hull, in 1751. Four candidates put themselves forward for this post, applying from a wide range of places: Hawdon from Newcastle, Richard Justice from Newark, Mr. Pick from Carlisle Cathedral and a Mr. Hartley from Lincolnshire. Justice and Hawdon were shortlisted; they were asked not only to play the organ, but also to put on a concert, a request that emphasises the strong link between organists and concert-promotion. A witness remarked that Hawdon ‘excelled, having performed three Concertos on three different Instruments, with great Applause, i.e. on the *Harpsicord*, *Violin*, and *Violoncello*’.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, the election was close and hotly disputed, necessitating a recount; Hawdon eventually won, partly because of a large number of spoiled votes intended for Justice.<sup>70</sup>

Hawdon remained at Hull for eighteen years (during which he oversaw the repair of the organ by Snetzler),<sup>71</sup> although he maintained his connections in the North-East

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<sup>66</sup> NC 19 October 1776. Edward’s wife, whom he had married only three years previously, died, probably from the same illness, thirteen months later [NC 22 November 1777].

<sup>67</sup> NJ 21 December 1776.

<sup>68</sup> Newspapers, *passim*.

<sup>69</sup> NJ 15-22 June 1751.

<sup>70</sup> Within four years, Justice was elected to St Mary’s Church in Hull [YCh 21 October 1755]; in 1756 he held a concert in Beverley, whose highlight came between the acts when Justice ‘exhibited several new and surprizing Equilibres on the Slack Wire, some of which have not been attempted by any but himself, who is confessed by all to be the greatest Performer in Europe’ [YC 24 February 1756]. The concert ended with ‘a grand Entertainment of beautiful artificial Fire-Works, so contrived as to give the highest pleasure without the least Offence, and to be entirely free from all Danger’ [idem].

<sup>71</sup> Smith, *Hull Organs*, p. 10.

and subscribed to Garth's edition of Marcello's Psalms between 1757 and 1764.<sup>72</sup> No records survive of concerts given in Hull at this time but later reports suggest that subscription concerts did exist.<sup>73</sup> Hawdon is known to have organised at least one concert in Beverley in February 1754<sup>74</sup> and was active in other people's concerts throughout the Yorkshire area, playing for instance in oratorios put on by Edward Miller, the organist of Doncaster in 1768.<sup>75</sup> The leader at this last concert was Robert Jobson, organist of Wakefield, who was later to be employed by Hawdon to lead oratorio performances in Newcastle.<sup>76</sup> Hawdon was also well acquainted with Thomas Haxby of York and recommended him to build the new organ for Louth Parish church in Lincolnshire;<sup>77</sup> Hawdon's pupil Mr Hill, became organist of Louth.<sup>78</sup>

In March 1769, Hawdon moved to Beverley Minster as organist.<sup>79</sup> A new organ was being built in the Minster by Snetzler, and Hawdon plunged straight into the organisation of a festival to celebrate the organ's opening. The festival of oratorio performances, put on at the height of the fashion for oratorios in the area, was planned for the first week of September, in the week after York Races, but was postponed for a fortnight owing to the prior commitments of the singers. Hawdon opted for distinguished vocal soloists but not those of the first rank or reputation; Frances Hudson was joined by William Matthews and a Miss Radcliffe from Oxford. He took advantage

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<sup>72</sup> Garth, *Marcello's Psalms*, Subscription Lists.

<sup>73</sup> In 1788 the *Newcastle Chronicle* published a brief obituary of Miss K. Williamson, daughter of a local bookseller who, it said, 'has for some time past been a singer at the public concerts in that town' [*NCh* 31 May 1788].

<sup>74</sup> *YC* 24 February 1754.

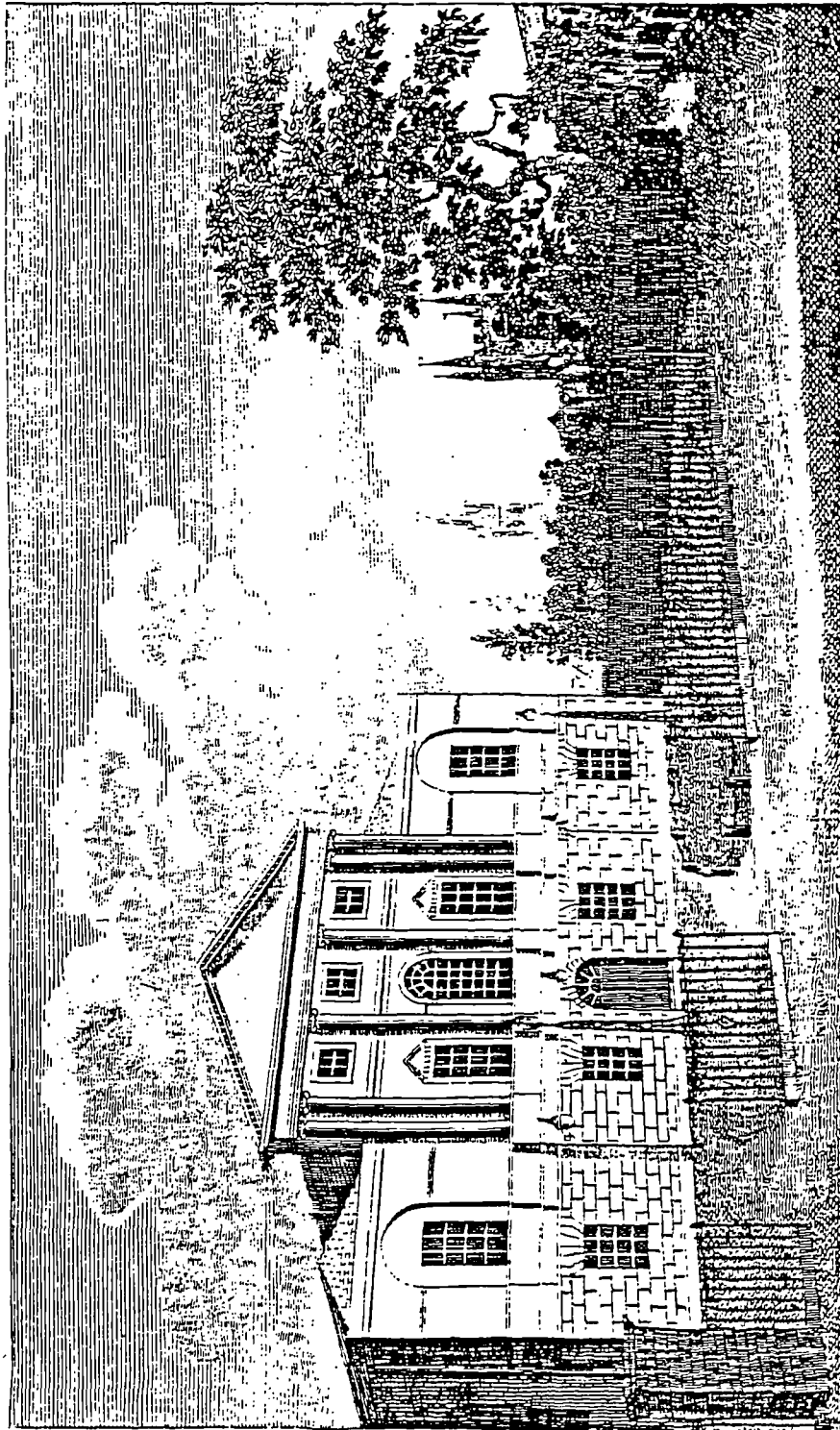
<sup>75</sup> *YC* 6 September 1768.

<sup>76</sup> *NC* 12 September 1778.

<sup>77</sup> C.J. Sturman and J.C. Pilans, 'Thomas Haxby and the Organ of Louth Parish Church, 1767-69', *BIOS, Journal*, 7, 1983, pp. 77-84.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80. In the throes of the local fashion for oratorios, Haxby wrote to Hill in May 1769 enquiring: 'Pray, is there any likelihood of an oratorio or other musical performance with you this summer?' but no oratorio performances took place in Louth until 1786 when they were directed by Matthias Hawdon's youngest son, Thomas, by then organist of Holy Trinity, Hull in his father's old place [*Ibid.*, pp. 81-84].

<sup>79</sup> *YML* H9/2 Chapter Acts of York Minster, 22 March 1769.



THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS.

*Opened June 24. 1776.*

Plate 16. The New Assembly Rooms on Westgate Road, Newcastle.

of Felice Giardini's presence in the area to engage him as leader of a band made up of all the usual local performers. *Messiah*, *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Samson* were performed on successive mornings, with the Coronation Anthem *Zadok the Priest* ending the *Samson* concert to mark the anniversary of the King's Coronation on that day. It is likely that Hawdon held regular concerts in the town, although no evidence of them now remains, except for a Race Week concert in 1770 in which Mrs. Hudson sang.<sup>80</sup>

Hawdon's motives for returning to his home town are not known; he may have been influenced by family considerations – his wife had died during his stay in Beverley and his eldest son, another Matthias, was apprenticed to his uncle the surgeon in Newcastle. He arrived early in the New Year of 1777 and immediately set about organising concerts, on 18 February and 15 April, filling to a certain extent the gap left by the missing subscription series.<sup>81</sup> The concerts were described as 'of vocal and instrumental music' and tickets cost 3s. each. A new elegant venue was now available in Newcastle – the smart New Assembly Rooms on Westgate Road built (with some attendant controversy) on land once part of the vicarage of St. John's Church. Hawdon held the first concert in the new rooms but for the second returned to the old Assembly Rooms in the Groat Market, the traditional venue for concerts.<sup>82</sup> He may have encountered problems of availability with the new venue or the experience of the first concert may have led him to expect too small an audience to fill the large new Rooms. Moreover, the Westgate rooms had been built for dancing, not concerts; the musicians were confined to a large gallery at the end of the larger Assembly Room, not a practical arrangement for a concert band.<sup>83</sup>

At the same time, Hawdon took steps to establish himself as a teacher:

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<sup>80</sup> YC 29 May 1770.

<sup>81</sup> NC 6 February, 5 April 1777.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 5 April 1777.

<sup>83</sup> See Anon, *A Short History of the Old Assembly Rooms, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1929) for the history of the building of the new rooms.

Matthew Hawdon, Organist, from Beverley, having been appointed to succeed the late Mr. Avison, as ORGANIST of St. Nicholas Church, begs leave to inform the Public, that he teaches Music at two guineas per Quarter, and a guinea entrance.<sup>84</sup>

A later advertisement in December of the same year reveals that Hawdon taught violin and cello (to 'gentlemen' only) every Monday and Tuesday evening at his house in Saville Row.<sup>85</sup> He also advertised several times for an apprentice.<sup>86</sup>

For the Race Week concert of 1777, Hawdon, faced with the problem of finding a vocal soloist, hired a singer from Yorkshire who was described in advertisements as Mrs. Hudson 'from the concert at Hull'.<sup>87</sup> Although no clear evidence exists to settle the point, it is likely that this was Frances Hudson of York and provides both clear evidence of regular concerts at Hull and of Mrs. Hudson's peregrinations. No record survives of any soloists at the Assize Week concert. By winter, Hawdon was ready to hold the winter subscription series again but his alteration of the terms of the series suggests an acknowledgement that the demand for public concert-giving was not as buoyant as it had been a decade before. Instead of the fourteen concerts at a cost of one guinea offered by Edward Avison, Hawdon offered only six held fortnightly, at a subscription cost of 18s. The price of individual tickets was increased from 3s. to 3s. 6d. The form and content of the first concert of the series, held on 19 November 1777, was determined by an event that had occurred barely a month earlier and which was indirectly to dictate the course of concert-giving in Newcastle over the next decade.

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<sup>84</sup> NC 8 February 1777.

<sup>85</sup> NJ 13 December 1777.

<sup>86</sup> e.g. NC 8 February 1777.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 21 June 1777.



Plate 17: Subscriber's ticket for Newcastle subscription series. (Blank discovered in back pocket of a 1777 diary belonging to Thomas Bewick and probably engraved by him. The original is about the size of a modern credit card.)

# 9

## FINANCIAL IMPERATIVES

### I: Matthias Hawdon and the choir from Durham

On 16 October 1777, a ceremony was held to dedicate the Freemasons' new home in Newcastle, St. John's Hall in Low Friar Street; the *Newcastle Courant* reported:

The Ceremony opened with two grand Anthems sung by the Choir from Durham, accompanied by a fine Organ and the completest band of music which this neighbourhood could furnish ... A Grand Ode composed for the dedication of Free-Masons-Hall and set to music by Mr. Fisher, was performed with great taste and judgement.<sup>1</sup>

Hawdon was a freemason, as were many prominent musicians in the area; he was present at this event and may have been one of the performers.<sup>2</sup> The Ode performed was almost certainly *Behold, how good and joyful a Thing it is, Brethren, to dwell together in*

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<sup>1</sup> NC 18 October 1777.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1 November 1777.

*Unity!* consisting of a chorus, air, recitative, and final chorus;<sup>3</sup> its enthusiastic reception determined Hawdon to give a repeat performance at the first of his winter subscription concerts which took place a month later.<sup>4</sup> On this occasion, the Ode was ‘performed in the great Assembly Room by a very large band, vocal and instrumental’,<sup>5</sup> Hawdon promised forty performers including choir and band. No soloists were advertised but it is probable that Hawdon used the performers from the original concert at the Freemasons’ Hall, including the choir from Durham. The *Newcastle Courant* claimed that almost 500 people attended the concert.<sup>6</sup>

The success of this concert affected the subscription series that followed and the mid-year concerts in 1778. For the first time in Newcastle, proposed programmes for all the concerts in the series were advertised; this may have been because of the brief break in continuity of the subscription series after Edward Avison’s death or because Hawdon’s concerts broke with the format and content to which subscribers would have been accustomed under the Avisons’ direction.<sup>7</sup> The second concert of the series was unusual in having three acts rather than two; later concerts settled into a more conventional format of two acts of four and five items respectively.<sup>8</sup> In all but the sixth and last concert of the series there was an emphasis on instrumental music with solo concertos of various types particularly prominent as in York. (Appendix 1) In the second concert, for instance, Hawdon was probably the soloist in a harpsichord concerto by Just and a violin concerto by Martini – a third concerto was a work for oboe.<sup>9</sup> (Ex. 9.1) Concerti grossi were frequently used to end an act although Hawdon concluded the

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<sup>3</sup> T.O. Todd, *The History of the Phoenix Lodge No. 94, Sunderland, 1753-1905* (Sunderland, for the Subscribers, 1906), pp. 43-4.

<sup>4</sup> *NCh* 1. November 1777.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>6</sup> *NC* 22 November 1777.

<sup>7</sup> After this first two series, Hawdon ceased advertising programmes almost entirely, no doubt assuming his subscribers now knew what to expect.

<sup>8</sup> *NC* 29 November 1777.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 December 1777.



later concerts of the series with marches of his own composition.<sup>10</sup> Works by a wide range of composers were included in the concerts but, with the exception of some instrumental works by Handel and one piece by Corelli in the fifth concert, the music played was by contemporary composers.<sup>11</sup>

**Ex. 9.1: Second subscription concert, 3 December 1777<sup>12</sup>**

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	Composer
ACT I	
Overture	Handel
Song	
Harpsichord concerto	Just
Violin Concerto	Martini
ACT II	
Symphony	Bach
Song	
Oboe concerto	Giordani
ACT III	
Overture	Handel
Song	
Quartetto for Violins	Kammel
Symphony	Hawdon

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From February 1778, however, there was a clear change in the nature of concerts which coincided with an increasing use of the Choir of Durham. The sixth and last subscription concert, and the Race and Assize Week concerts later in the year, show a much greater emphasis on vocal works; all advertise the attendance of both singing men and boy choristers.<sup>13</sup> (Ex. 9.2)

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<sup>10</sup> e.g. *NC* 17 January 1778.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 February 1778.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 December 1777.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 February, 13 June, 8 August 1778.

### Ex. 9.2: Sixth Subscription concert, 24 February 1778<sup>14</sup>

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#### ACT I

Overture, <i>Messiah</i>	Handel
Recitative, song and chorus, <i>Messiah</i>	Handel
Harpsichord concerto	Schroeter
Trio Song, <i>Acis and Galatea</i>	Handel
Concerto Violino <sup>15</sup>	Geminiani

#### ACT II

Symphony	Hawdon
Song, 'Thro the Winds'	Smith
Overture, <i>Pharamond</i>	Handel
Song, chorus, recitative and Hallelujah, <i>Messiah</i>	Handel

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Unlike the earlier concerts of the series which had ended with instrumental items (in both acts), these later concerts concluded many acts with a large-scale choral item – the *Hallelujah Chorus* (with the chorus and recitative before it),<sup>16</sup> a song and chorus from *Judas Maccabaeus*,<sup>17</sup> the song and chorus, *Happy Pair*, from *Alexander's Feast*.<sup>18</sup> Handel dominated; one of his overtures usually preceded the choral extracts, although the two were not always from the same work. The last subscription concert, for instance, ended with the overture from *Pharamond* followed by extracts from *Messiah*;<sup>19</sup> in the Race Week concert, the first half ended with the overture from *Deidamia*, followed by extracts from *Judas Maccabaeus*.<sup>20</sup> The choral extracts were inserted at the expense of solo concertos, a genre which declined in frequency of performance and in variety. With this emphasis on Handel came also a greater frequency of performances of works by older, non-contemporary composers such as Avison and Geminiani whose works had not appeared at all in the earlier concerts of the series.

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<sup>14</sup> NC 21 February 1778.

<sup>15</sup> The programme seems to suggest a solo violin concerto but a concerto grosso is possible.

<sup>16</sup> NC 28 February, 8 August 1778.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 20 June 1778.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 8 August 1778.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 21 February 1778.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 20 June 1778.

It is likely that the choral extracts performed in these concerts proved popular as Hawdon put on a series of oratorio performances in early October 1778; these are the first known oratorio performances in Newcastle. Four concerts were held between 6 and 9 October (Table 9.1) including both the light and the more serious side of the genre – *Alexander's Feast* and *Acis and Galatea* being balanced by *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Messiah*.

**Table 9.1: Oratorio performances in Newcastle, October 1778<sup>21</sup>**

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6 October	Tuesday	evening	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
7 October	Wednesday	morning	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
8 October	Thursday	evening	<i>Acis and Galatea</i> and Coronation Anthem
9 October	Friday	morning	<i>Messiah</i>

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When it came to hiring performers, Hawdon was clearly still under the influence of his Yorkshire connections; the soloists employed were those who regularly toured the oratorio circuit of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Robert Jobson (now organist at Leeds) led the orchestra and Hawdon brought in 'the celebrated Men and Women Chorus Singers from Lancashire'. Frances Hudson took one of the female solo parts; the other was taken by Miss Harwood, a young singer who over the next few years became well-known as an oratorio performer in Yorkshire, particularly in the Leeds area.<sup>22</sup> She may have been a pupil of Jobson's,<sup>23</sup> and later moved to London, singing with the Concert of Antient Music.<sup>24</sup> The only advertised contribution of Durham Cathedral personnel to the series was Hawdon's use of Edward Meredith and William Evance as vocal soloists,<sup>25</sup> although it is possible that other members of the choir may have sung in the choruses.

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<sup>21</sup> NC 12 September 1778.

<sup>22</sup> Hargrave, p. 341.

<sup>23</sup> Idem.

<sup>24</sup> NC 14 September 1782.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 12 September 1778.

Mrs. Hudson sang an Italian aria between the acts of each oratorio and Hawdon played an organ concerto after the first act.<sup>26</sup>

The oratorio performances, at the Assembly Rooms on Westgate Road, were eagerly anticipated to the extent that, even before the performances, the *Newcastle Journal* was suggesting that they be made a regular event, although the paper conceded that:

As performances of the above extent cannot be supposed an annual treat to the town, from the immense expence attending them, perhaps a septennial one may be a consequence of this.<sup>27</sup>

No evidence survives to indicate the success, financial or musical, of the performances.

A month and a half later, the new subscription series was opened with a flourish of well-known and probably expensive performers. Frances Hudson of York shared the vocal parts with William Evance; as leader, Hawdon hired a Mr. Shaw whom he described as the leader of the Vauxhall Gardens orchestra in London.<sup>28</sup> Thomas Shaw had just taken over the management of the York subscription series in conjunction with Mrs. Hudson.<sup>29</sup> The two visitors stayed only for the first concert of the series; ambitious vocal items in succeeding concerts – a cantata by Giordani, and another by Arnold – suggest Evance's continuing participation.<sup>30</sup> This 1778-9 season followed an almost identical pattern to that of the previous year; although programmes for the fourth and fifth concerts do not survive, it seems that the earlier concerts concentrated largely on instrumental works by contemporary composers,<sup>31</sup> while the last concert and the Race and Assize Week concerts in the summer again swung back towards vocal music and the involvement of the choir of Durham. Both Meredith and Evance sang in these latter concerts, with Hawdon's young son Thomas (aged 14) as an additional soloist in the last

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<sup>26</sup> *NCh* 26 September 1778.

<sup>27</sup> *NC* 26 September 1778.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 November 1778.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 11.

<sup>30</sup> *NC* 28 November 1778; *NC* 12 December 1778.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 November, 28 November, 12 December 1778.

subscription concert. Meredith ended the sixth subscription concert with an acclaimed rendering of Purcell's 'To Arms, Britons strike Home', to mark the continuing war with the American Colonies,<sup>32</sup> and repeated the performance in the Race Week concert which was surprisingly low-key; with the exception of the Purcell and a concerto grosso by Avison, the music was all contemporary.<sup>33</sup> The Assize Week concert a month later was a slightly uncomfortable compromise between a vocal and instrumental concert and an oratorio performance; music by Arne, Howard, Hook and Hawdon in the first half was balanced by a performance of *Acis and Galatea* in the second half. The patriotic element became yet more pronounced. Meredith sang a Handel aria – 'Arm, arm, ye Brave' – and Evance, who was known as a composer of harpsichord and piano works, contributed a song, duet and chorus of his own composition, entitled 'King George and Old England'.<sup>34</sup> (Appendix 1)

For the 1779-80 season, only two complete programmes survive. These show a conventional alternation of vocal and instrumental items with the emphasis very much on the works of contemporary composers.<sup>35</sup> Other concerts may have included more vocal music – the second concert of the series, for instance, advertised the attendance of the men and boys of Durham Choir to sing choruses from *Messiah*.<sup>36</sup> Hawdon, like most Newcastle musicians (and some much further afield), hired the local engraver, Thomas Bewick, to print tickets for his concerts; Bewick's records show that Hawdon required 200 subscription tickets for this series, although it is not known if Hawdon sold all of these.<sup>37</sup> Hawdon's usual requirement for Assize Concerts was 50 tickets.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> NC 20 February 1779.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 19 June 1779.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 31 July 1779.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 6 November 1779, 12 February 1779.

<sup>36</sup> NCh 20 November 1779.

<sup>37</sup> TAWS 1269/12, Accounts of Thomas Bewick, 13 October 1779.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., e.g. 14 August 1780. Bewick's customers included musicians from Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland, York, Hull and Beverley.

## II: Bankruptcy

About this time Hawdon began to suffer financial problems. He had apparently misjudged the situation when setting out his terms for teaching. His charges of two guineas per quarter and an entrance fee of one guinea may have represented the rates he had been accustomed to charge in Beverley, but they were not acceptable in Newcastle. In November 1779, about three years after his return to the city, he made an announcement in the *Newcastle Courant*:

Mr. Hawdon begs leave in a most respectful manner to inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of this town and neighbourhood, he has had at various times hints given that his terms in teaching Music have been thought expensive, and as he ever wishes to give that general satisfaction in his profession which may recommend him to their regard and favor, he will at the commencement of the New Year, reduce his terms, which have been hitherto Two Guineas a Quarter, to a Guinea and a Half, Entrance One Guinea.<sup>39</sup>

Hawdon also reduced his charges for teaching at a local boarding school.<sup>40</sup>

His financial position cannot have been helped by ambitious plans for the 1780-1 season. For this series he hired the vocal soloist, Miss Harwood, who had appeared in his oratorio series the previous year. As an appetiser, he held a pre-series concert on 26 October in the New Assembly Rooms, in which Miss Harwood was joined by her teacher, Robert Jobson as leader of the band, and by the band of Sir George Saville's Regiment.<sup>41</sup> Tickets for this extra concert cost the usual rate of 3s. 6d. and the subscription rate remained at one guinea for six fortnightly concerts.<sup>42</sup> Hawdon again required 200 subscription tickets from Bewick, which suggests that he had sold most of

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<sup>39</sup> *NC* 27 November 1779.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>41</sup> *NCh* 21 October 1780.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*.

that number in the previous year.<sup>43</sup> No information is available with regard to repertoire in this series; Hawdon had long since ceased to advertise programmes in local papers.

In April 1781, two months after the end of this series and a week and a half after Easter, Hawdon launched another expensive venture, a second series of oratorios. The form of this mini-series was very similar to that of 1778 although the repertoire was more limited. (Table 9.2)

**Table 9.2: Oratorio series, April 1781<sup>44</sup>**

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10 April	Tuesday	evening	<i>Messiah</i>
11 April	Wednesday	evening	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i> and Coronation Anthem
12 April	Thursday	evening	<i>Messiah</i>

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Miss Harwood had stayed beyond the end of the winter subscription and was one of the vocal soloists together with Evance and Meredith. Jobson returned as first violin and the choruses were sung by a mixture of Lancashire singers and the Gentlemen of Durham Choir. Hawdon advertised ‘the other Instrumental Parts by the best performers that can be procured: the whole to be accompany’d with Trumpets, French Horns, and Kettle Drums’.<sup>45</sup>

After the performances, Hawdon inserted a note of thanks in the *Newcastle Courant* ‘for the singular favours he has received on account of his late performances’;<sup>46</sup> the notice concealed the realities of the situation. Hawdon had anticipated huge audiences, ordering no fewer than 950 tickets from Bewick,<sup>47</sup> but either the audiences did not materialise or, if they did, the income was not equal to the expenses. For the first time since the 1730s no Race Week concert was held in 1781 and in July Bewick’s accounts reveal the full extent of Hawdon’s problems. Hawdon had not paid bills from

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<sup>43</sup> TAWS 1269/12, Bewick’s Accounts, 27 November 1780.

<sup>44</sup> NC 17 March 1781.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 17 March 1781.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 14 April 1781.

<sup>47</sup> TAWS 1269/12, Bewick’s Accounts, 24 March, 31 March, 9 April 1780.

Bewick for two years and his total debt of £4 7s. 9d. was only part of a much larger whole. A note in Bewick's ledger records the result of a meeting between Hawdon and his creditors:

The above [the debt to Bewick] to be paid by an annual Composition for the benefit of his Creditors arising out of 60l. p<sup>r</sup> annum, to be set apart for that purpose, being his salary as Organist, 50l. and 10l. to be added to it, as p<sup>r</sup> agreement.<sup>48</sup>

Such a composition would only have taken place if Hawdon had been declared bankrupt. His debt to Bewick was divided into five payments of 17s. 6d. to be paid annually.<sup>49</sup> If the £60 mentioned in the composition was to be set aside for each of the five years, as Bewick's note suggests, Hawdon's debts must have amounted to the substantial sum of £300.

### III: 'Such majestic ability'<sup>50</sup>

Edward Meredith faced no such financial problems. His salary at Durham Cathedral remained constant throughout the 1780s at £50 per annum but formed only a small part of his income.<sup>51</sup> During the decade, Meredith established himself as the best-known and most admired of local musicians and undertook an amount of travelling which, even taking into account the rapidly improving state of roads and communications in this period, is astonishing.

He established a busy schedule in the area from the year of his arrival (1779), appearing in subscription concerts in Newcastle<sup>52</sup> and Durham,<sup>53</sup> in the concert for the King's birthday organised by Ebdon in Sunderland<sup>54</sup> (and possibly in subscription series

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<sup>48</sup> TAWS 1269/12, Bewick's Accounts, 28 July 1781.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>50</sup> NA 13 August 1791.

<sup>51</sup> CA TA passim.

<sup>52</sup> NC 20 February 1779.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 February 1779.

<sup>54</sup> NCh 29 May 1779.



there too) and in mid-year concerts in both Newcastle and Durham.<sup>55</sup> Throughout his residence in the North-East, these were the regular events of his musical year which he rarely missed. In addition, he sang in occasional concerts such as that put on in October 1779 to celebrate the anniversary of the dedication of the Freemasons' Hall in Newcastle. This concert was directed by Hawdon and again included the work that had been so popular the previous year: 'Behold how good and joyful a thing it is, Brethren'. Meredith was described as *Brother* as was Hawdon. Three other singing men from the Cathedral, including William Evance, accompanied him.<sup>56</sup> Evance, who was probably about ten years older than Meredith (he had come to the Cathedral in 1767<sup>57</sup>), became Meredith's regular singing partner in concerts, and in late 1781, after two years of concerts which closely replicated the schedule of 1779, the two men felt themselves sufficiently well-known to hold a benefit in Newcastle. The benefit was held in conjunction with two other singing men, George Ashton and Thomas Robinson, who were the principal cellist and first violin of the Durham concert band;<sup>58</sup> the audience numbered around 300 and the concert was evidently sufficiently successful to be repeated the following year.<sup>59</sup>

In 1782, Meredith expanded his activities further. Until this point, his concerts, with the exception of the Freemasons' concerts, had all been connected closely or tangentially with the Cathedral: with Ebdon's concerts in Durham and Sunderland and with Hawdon's use of the choir in Newcastle. From 1782, however, he began to sing in concerts arranged by bodies and groups unconnected with the Cathedral. His first forays, in 1782 and 1783, were to the cluster of small towns on the coast – North and South Shields, and Tynemouth. North Shields was unusual in that much of its musical

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<sup>55</sup> NC 10 July, 24 July 1779.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 2 October 1779.

<sup>57</sup> CA DAB 28 September 1767.

<sup>58</sup> NC 17 November 1781.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 30 November 1782.

activity in the 1770s and 1780s was originated not by a musician but by an inn-keeper, Mr. Kerr of the Bee-hive. In 1772, Kerr had advertised that he had fitted up ‘a large and commodious new room ... at the request of a number of his friends’ and proposed having a concert there once a month during the winter.<sup>60</sup> These concerts were apparently still taking place as late as 1782 when Kerr hired Meredith as vocal soloist for a concert in November.<sup>61</sup> The leader of the band on this occasion was Mr. Campbell, organist of North Shields Church; Campbell later hired Meredith for concerts in South Shields (May 1783) and Tynemouth (July 1783).<sup>62</sup> Meredith also began to be the recipient of benefits from local bodies, such as the Gentlemen of the Sunderland Hunt.<sup>63</sup>

From 1784, Meredith moved further afield. Dean and Chapter Act Books had from his arrival recorded permission for leaves of absence, and it is possible that Meredith had used these periods – sometimes as much as seven weeks – to sing outside the area.<sup>64</sup> His first known trip was in November 1784 to Leeds, where he sang in an oratorio festival deliberately arranged to echo the London Handel Commemoration earlier the same year, offering ‘the same Selection of SACRED MUSIC from HANDEL, which was performed in *Westminster Abbey*, on the last Day of the Commemoration’.<sup>65</sup> Meredith and Robert Jobson’s pupil, Miss Harwood, sang in *Samson* and *Messiah* and two miscellaneous concerts; Jobson led the band.<sup>66</sup> This seems to have been the first of a series of appearances in Leeds by Meredith; in May 1785 he held a benefit in Leeds with Jobson as first violin<sup>67</sup> and in January 1787 he was engaged as one of the vocal

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<sup>60</sup> NC 21 November 1772. Prior to this, only one concert is known at North Shields, a benefit in 1751 for an actress, Mrs. St. Clair [NG 20 March 1751].

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 19 October 1782.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 17 May 1783, 28 June 1783.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 2 November 1782.

<sup>64</sup> e.g. CA DAB 18 December 1779, 8 September 1781, 2 March, 16 March 1782.

<sup>65</sup> NC 3 November 1784.

<sup>66</sup> Idem.

<sup>67</sup> Hargrave, p. 342.

soloists in a subscription series, receiving another benefit.<sup>68</sup> By this time he was also soloist in subscription series in Newcastle, Durham and Sunderland and, from at least 1786, in Morpeth.<sup>69</sup> The leader of this latter series, a Mr. Galot, is the only known foreign musician brought into the area to lead a subscription series; a handbill for one of his benefits states that he was from Naples.<sup>70</sup> His activities, and those of the Morpeth subscription series (run by a Committee of Gentlemen), are known only from one newspaper advertisement and handbills for Galot's benefits; he held no less than three benefits in Newcastle between July and October 1785.<sup>71</sup> (Appendix 1)

Meredith was also by this time singing at concerts in York (at the dedication of the new organ in St. Michael le Belfrey,<sup>72</sup> and in subscription concerts there),<sup>73</sup> in Manchester (at the Music Festival in July 1785),<sup>74</sup> and in Doncaster (in oratorios during the Race Week).<sup>75</sup> He also travelled to Edinburgh at least once, singing at a public concert put on by the Edinburgh Music Society in July 1785.<sup>76</sup> (See Table 9.3 for Meredith's known engagements for 1785 and 1786) His attendance at Durham Cathedral must have been severely curtailed even when he was not officially given leave of absence, particularly in view of the fact that he was also parish clerk of St. Nicholas's Church in the Market Place.<sup>77</sup> The Cathedral authorities do not appear to have complained.

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<sup>68</sup> Hargrave, pp. 342-3.

<sup>69</sup> NC 31 December 1786.

<sup>70</sup> CL Handbill (Newcastle), 12 July 1785.

<sup>71</sup> CL Handbill (Newcastle), 8 July 1785; NC 13 August 1785, 29 October 1785. In the early nineteenth century, a Peter Galot was organist for the Sunderland Lodge of Freemasons; a connection between the two men is likely but not at present provable [See T.O.Todd, *History of the Phoenix Lodge*, passim].

<sup>72</sup> YC 1 March 1785. William Evance also sang in this concert.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 6 February 1787.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 5 July 1785.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 11 September 1787.

<sup>76</sup> NC 23 July 1785.

<sup>77</sup> Parish registers of St. Nicholas's Church, Durham, passim.

**Table 93: Edward Meredith's engagements for 1785 and 1786**

This list is not comprehensive: Meredith probably sang at all Durham subscription series concerts, at all Morpeth concerts in 1786 at least and at regular subscription concerts in Leeds. The dates of these are not known precisely. In addition, his activities during periods of leave are not always clear.

Date	Venue
<b>1785</b>	
1 February	oratorios in Newcastle
8 February	last subscription concert, Durham
15 March	benefit in Newcastle (Forest Hunt)
22 March	opening of organ for St Michael le Belfrey, York
5 April	dedication of Phoenix Lodge, Sunderland
13 April	charity sermon, St. Michael le Belfrey, York
1 May	benefit in Leeds
6 June	King's birthday concert, Sunderland
24 June	Freemasons' festival, Newcastle (am)
	benefit from Stewards of the races, Newcastle (pm)
22 July	Assize Week concert, Durham
[20 July	<i>given three weeks leave of absence from Cathedral]</i>
26 July	Edinburgh Music Society concert
7 August	Race Week concert, Durham
15 August	Galot's benefit, Newcastle
[3 September	<i>given five weeks leave of absence from Cathedral]</i>
21-3	Musical Festival, Manchester
September	
4 October	first subscription concert, Durham
17 October	Avison's benefit from Freemasons, Newcastle
18 October	second subscription concert, Durham
2 November	Galot's benefit, Newcastle
7 November	first subscription concert, Stockton on Tees
19 December	first subscription concert, Newcastle (promoter with Ebdon)
<b>1786</b>	
10 January	Morpeth subscription concert (regular singer)
12 January	first subscription concert Leeds
	[also benefit: date unknown]
17 January	second subscription concert, Newcastle
14 February	third subscription concert, Newcastle
22 February	benefit for John Friend, Durham
14 March	fourth subscription concert, Newcastle
28 March	benefit, Newcastle (Forest Hunt)
15 April	charity sermon for benefit of women lying in, Newcastle
25 April	benefit for Galot, Morpeth
9 May	benefit, Sunderland (Musical Society)
4 June	King's birthday concert, Sunderland
21 June	benefit, Newcastle (Stewards of Races)
[24 June	<i>given leave of absence for ten days]</i>
27 July	Race Week concert, Durham
11 August	Assize Week concert, Durham
15 August	Assize Week concert, Newcastle
24 August	opening of organ, St Hild's chapel, South Shields
[28 September	<i>given leave of absence for three weeks]</i>
1 October	charity service, South Shields
3 October	first subscription concert, Durham
5 October	<i>Messiah</i> , Darlington

#### IV: 'One deserving the greatest encouragement',<sup>78</sup>

A number of other musicians were beginning to establish themselves in Newcastle during the 1780s. One of these was Charles Avison jnr., newly returned from Russia and, at first, finding life as difficult as it had been before his departure. In December he had been appointed organist at All Saints Church on the Quayside, replacing Solomon Strolger who had died after occupying the post for 53 years.<sup>79</sup> Despite a large family, Strolger had amassed a considerable amount of money, leaving to his surviving daughters at least £4,000 invested with the Corporation.<sup>80</sup> Strolger's salary (and Avison's) at All Saints was only £20 per annum;<sup>81</sup> Strolger derived an extra £5 from acting as a wait but much of his income must have come from teaching activities – he was however one of the most retiring of the city's organists and never advertised.

Avison's financial situation in 1780, like Matthias Hawdon's, was precarious. A writer signing himself *Clerimont* sent a letter to the *Newcastle Courant* in mid-January, only three weeks after Avison's appointment, appealing for help in fulsome terms:

In this apostate age, when our youth is totally immersed in sensuality, 'tis a duty incumbent upon every well-wisher of the community to promote the least appearance of industry in any individual, who has had the courage to deviate from the licentious customs of the times. – ... Give me leave, through the channels of your paper, to point out to the parishioners of All-Saints, one deserving the greatest encouragement, I mean, their Organist.<sup>82</sup>

*Clerimont* admired Avison's 'industry and knowledge in his profession' and 'the uncommon attention given by him in introducing Divine Harmony into their solemn

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<sup>78</sup> NC 13 January 1780.

<sup>79</sup> Co. Co. 21 December 1779

<sup>80</sup> TAWS 543, CAN Xmas Bill, 1782.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 1779-80 passim.

<sup>82</sup> NC 13 January 1780.

Meetings'; he recommended Avison's playing which, 'though a little singular', would, he felt, encourage more devotion than 'those unmeaning rants from the Organ-loft which they formerly experienced', clearly a jibe at Strolger's expense.<sup>83</sup> He pointed out that the welfare of musicians depended entirely on the favour of their audiences and rather patronisingly suggested that generosity towards such people would encourage them to emulate their betters.<sup>84</sup> A subscription book was opened at All Saints for Avison's benefit with a view to increasing his salary, but it is not known whether Avison received any money from this source.<sup>85</sup>

Over the next few years, Avison's situation slowly improved as he established himself. As organist at All Saints, his duties included teaching the charity children of the parish and occasionally composing anthems for them; the children performed these anthems and the psalms Avison taught them at charity sermons preached once or twice a year on their behalf.<sup>86</sup> On at least one of these occasions a collection was made for Avison 'in consideration of his Teaching [the Children]'.<sup>87</sup> (He also took his choir of children to sing at St. John's on behalf of the charity children there.)<sup>88</sup> He may have derived income from activities at the theatre; on at least one occasion in March 1780 (lightly disguised under the 'Italian' name of Signor Carlos Avisonsini), he played a harpsichord concerto there.<sup>89</sup> His association with the Freemasons, of which organisation he was a member, proved very profitable, providing him with several known benefits. In 1783 he shared a benefit with Edward Meredith;<sup>90</sup> in later years, the benefit was his alone, although Meredith and Evance provided the vocal parts.<sup>91</sup> For

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<sup>83</sup> NC 13 January 1780.

<sup>84</sup> Idem.

<sup>85</sup> NC 20 January 1780.

<sup>86</sup> e.g. NCh 18 October 1780.

<sup>87</sup> NC 31 January 1784.

<sup>88</sup> NCh 24 March 1787.

<sup>89</sup> NC 25 March 1780. For music in the theatre, see Chapter 12.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 11 October 1783.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 15 October 1785.

these concerts, Avison followed local practice and bought his tickets from Thomas Bewick, ordering 200 tickets for the 1783 concert, 100 for a concert in March 1787, plus a further 200 tickets in mid-July of the latter year for a concert of which records do not survive.<sup>92</sup> Avison also followed local practice in being dilatory in paying Bewick; his debt from 1783 was only paid – in part – three days after the 1785 concert.<sup>93</sup> Eleven shillings remained unpaid, together with the bills for the two concerts in 1787; Bewick took out a summons against Avison (adding the cost to the bill)<sup>94</sup> and was finally paid the £1 1s. 10d. he was owed in 1793, ten years after most of the debt was originally incurred.<sup>95</sup>

More stable financially was another musician who came to the area in 1781, possibly from Yorkshire, and who stayed to become the most prominent musician in Newcastle during the 1790s. Thomas Wright's first known concert appearances were in York in 1780 when he played clarinet concertos in four benefits in late February and March. In the advertisements for these concerts he is named as a soloist without explanatory information, suggesting that he was well-known in the city and may even have been a local man.<sup>96</sup> Wright had probably spent some time before this in London; the subscription lists for his Opus 1 (published c1788) lists six subscribers in the capital, all players at the Opera House.<sup>97</sup> He returned to York for at least one benefit in February 1781,<sup>98</sup> but by October of that year he was probably settled in Newcastle. In that month

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<sup>92</sup> TAWS 1269/13, Bewick's Accounts, 10 October 1783, 9 March 1787, 30 July 1787.

<sup>93</sup> TAWS 1269/22, Bewick's Ledger Book, 20 October 1785.

<sup>94</sup> Idem.

<sup>95</sup> Idem.

<sup>96</sup> YC 22 February, 7 March 1780.

<sup>97</sup> *Six Songs with a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord ... composed by Thomas Wright, Newcastle upon Tyne* (?Newcastle c1788).

<sup>98</sup> YCh 23 February 1781.

a clarinet concerto was played in the Freemasons' Anniversary concert – no performer was named but no other clarinet player is known in Newcastle at this period.<sup>99</sup> In similar fashion, a trio on the clarinet was advertised without performer for Hawdon's Assize Concert of 1782.<sup>100</sup> Wright was certainly established as a performer at the Newcastle theatre from April of that year and much of his known activity in the first half of the decade was connected with performances there. He played concertos or other solos between the acts of plays<sup>101</sup> and accompanied actresses in songs – on 5 April 1786 for instance, he accompanied a Mrs. Peile in 'the favourite song of 'Adieu thou dreary Pile'.<sup>102</sup> A number of songs of his own composition were performed, chiefly between acts: 'Fanny of the Dale' and 'The Sons of the Forest' were first performed at the theatre in Newcastle on 13 April 1785 and 29 March 1786 respectively.<sup>103</sup> The provision of music of this type was generally the responsibility of the leader of the theatre band, but there is no known reference to Wright as a violinist until June 1786 when he played first violin in a benefit for Edward Meredith.<sup>104</sup> He was, however, leader of the theatre band by 1804 and may have held the post at an earlier date.<sup>105</sup>

Edward Meredith's friendship was clearly of great value to Wright at this time. Their acquaintance may have dated from the concert in October 1781 at which Meredith was vocal soloist.<sup>106</sup> In early 1785, Wright played a clarinet concerto in a benefit given for Meredith by the Gentlemen of the Forest Hunt in Newcastle; this concerto was apparently so popular that he was asked to repeat it at a theatre performance a few days later.<sup>107</sup> The following year, in February 1786, he made his first known appearance in

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<sup>99</sup> *NC* 13 October 1781.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 July 1782.

<sup>101</sup> e.g. *NC* 20 April 1782, 27 March 1784.

<sup>102</sup> *CL* Playbill (Newcastle), 5 April 1786.

<sup>103</sup> *NC* 9 April 1785, 25 March 1786.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 June 1786.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 December 1804.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 October 1781.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 March 1785.



1

## FANNY OF THE DALE.

The Words by Cunningham

Amoroso

Declining let the Da - mask

Rose, With en - vious grief look pale. The sum - mer bloom more

free - ly glows In Fan - ny of the Dale. In Fanny In

Flute

Plate 18: *Fanny of the Dale* by Thomas Wright. Originally performed at the Newcastle theatre on 13 April 1785.

Durham at a benefit for a relatively new singing man, John Friend,<sup>108</sup> and in the middle of that year took part in the Race and Assize Week concerts there; these were the first of many visits to the city.<sup>109</sup> In most of these early concerts he played clarinet only; Edward Meredith, however, hired Wright as leader of the band in his benefit concerts throughout the area, in preference to his fellow singing man, Thomas Robinson, who led the Durham band.<sup>110</sup>

In the late 1780s, Wright began to extend his activities beyond Newcastle. His appearances in Durham were followed by a benefit in Sunderland in early 1787 with Meredith performing as vocal soloist;<sup>111</sup> in October of the same year, George Goodchild, the Sunderland organist, employed Wright as leader of the band and clarinettist in his annual benefit.<sup>112</sup> Wright continued to appear in Goodchild's benefits until the early 1790s. By 1788, even Ebdon was employing Wright as leader in preference to Robinson in the King's birthday concert in Sunderland.<sup>113</sup> At the same time, Wright was establishing a presence further north in Morpeth where he held two benefits over the winter of 1787-8 and was granted a further benefit by the Steward of Morpeth Races in September 1788.<sup>114</sup> Wright may have been acting as leader of the subscription concerts in Morpeth in the absence or death of its usual leader, Mr. Galot; if so, the association did not last beyond the end of 1788. Wright also acted as leader and clarinet soloist in a concert held in South Shields by an unknown Mr. Sanderson (possibly an actor) in December 1787.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> NC 11 February 1786. Friend had been sworn in on 1 February 1783 [CA DAB 1 February 1783].

<sup>109</sup> NC 22 July, 5 August 1786.

<sup>110</sup> e.g. *ibid.*, 10 June 1786.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 February 1787.

<sup>112</sup> NCh 27 October 1787. Goodchild was another musician closely associated with the Freemasons; he was organist of the Sunderland Lodge from 1780 [T.O. Todd, *History of the Phoenix Lodge*, p. 51].

<sup>113</sup> NC 31 May 1788.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 November 1787, 22 March, 13 September 1788.

<sup>115</sup> NCh 22 December 1787.

By the 1780s, the waits had become more respectable as a body than in the earlier parts of the century. A rash of deaths in the 1780s led to almost all the personnel changing; several of the new waits were professional musicians of a high quality. One of these men was a well-known player of the Northumbrian pipes, John Peacock.<sup>116</sup> Peacock made most of his living from teaching – he was hired by, amongst others, Thomas Bewick.<sup>117</sup> A second wait, appointed in 1786, John Thompson, was yet another of the young musicians establishing themselves in Newcastle in this decade; his career indicates the variety of activities that some musicians undertook in order to earn a living.<sup>118</sup>

Thompson, a native of Sunderland and probably the son of a linen-draper, was a chorister of Durham Cathedral between 1754 and 1759;<sup>119</sup> in 1759, he was given the usual fee of forty shillings when he left the choir<sup>120</sup> and seems to have become apprenticed to a breeches maker. His marriage in 1776 took place in Sunderland,<sup>121</sup> as did the birth of his son, Thomas, the following year.<sup>122</sup> By August 1777, Thompson had moved from Sunderland to Newcastle and was advertising himself as ‘Breeches Maker and Glover next door to Mrs. Place, the Crown and Thistle in the Groat-Market, Newcastle’,<sup>123</sup> adding that he intended ‘to teach Gentlemen to play on the Violin, Hautboy, Clarinet, and French Horn’.<sup>124</sup>

The death of his wife in 1778 left him with two small children whom he seems to have brought up on his own – he did not remarry until 1796.<sup>125</sup> In February 1779, he advertised the opening of an Academy ‘to teach all Vocal Music’, stating as his

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<sup>116</sup> Co. Co. 6 October 1783.

<sup>117</sup> TAWS 1269/12, Bewick’s Accounts, *passim*. Peacock taught Bewick’s son, Robert.

<sup>118</sup> Co. Co. 27 February 1786.

<sup>119</sup> CA TA, *passim*.

<sup>120</sup> CA DAB 28 September 1759.

<sup>121</sup> Marriage Registers of Sunderland parish church, 20 February 1776.

<sup>122</sup> Baptismal registers of Sunderland parish church, 17 April 1777.

<sup>123</sup> NC 9 August 1779.

<sup>124</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>125</sup> NCh 13 August 1796.

qualification that ‘he was regularly educated under the late Mr. Hesletine, Organist of the Choir of Durham’.<sup>126</sup> Thompson’s advertisement coincided with Matthias Hawdon’s ‘discovery’ of the Durham Choir and their first extended appearances in Newcastle concerts; the Academy, and Thompson’s stressing of his connection with Durham Cathedral, may have been a deliberate attempt to make use of the choir’s popularity. Thompson offered to teach both men and women at the rate of one guinea per quarter, or at a slightly dearer rate if they wished to be taught in their own homes.<sup>127</sup> The Academy was not advertised again and may not have survived in that form. Thompson himself occasionally sang in concerts, being named as vocal soloist at two Freemasons’ concerts, in October 1779 (when he shared the vocal parts with Meredith, Evance and another singing man from Durham)<sup>128</sup> and in October 1781.<sup>129</sup> He was described as Brother Thompson on both occasions. It is probable that he also sang at other concerts of which details have not survived.

In March 1782, Thompson held a benefit concert in the city, using as vocal soloist a new singing man, Thomas Acton, who had come to the Cathedral from Lichfield<sup>130</sup> and had been sworn in only two months previously.<sup>131</sup> Thomas Robinson led the band and George Ashton played principal cello; apart from Thompson himself, the only named soloist not from Durham Cathedral was a second singer, Mrs. Mapples, an actress from the local company. The concert included extracts from *Judas Maccabaeus*.<sup>132</sup> Edward Meredith was not in the area and did not appear. Thompson had ordered 300 tickets from Bewick the engraver<sup>133</sup> but did not pay his debt for nearly a

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<sup>126</sup> NC 9 August 1779.

<sup>127</sup> Idem.

<sup>128</sup> NC 2 October 1779.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 6 October 1781.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 9 March 1782.

<sup>131</sup> CA DAB 5 January 1782.

<sup>132</sup> NC 9 March 1782.

<sup>133</sup> TAWS 1269/22, Bewick’s Accounts, 9 March 1782.

year<sup>134</sup> although payment may have been delayed by an argument over deficiencies in the printing for which Bewick allowed a discount.<sup>135</sup> Thompson never held another benefit.

His main source of income remained his breeches shop which eventually moved to the Side, a little closer to the heart of the city on the Quayside. His teaching practice continued to expand; he offered instruction on most wind instruments and on the violin; he also took in ‘young gentlemen’ for board and lodging.<sup>136</sup> Even all this was evidently not enough; late in the 1780s, he became parish clerk of St. Nicholas’s Church<sup>137</sup> and in 1786 applied for, and was appointed to, the office of wait,<sup>138</sup>

#### **V: ‘On the most reasonable terms’<sup>139</sup>**

Also establishing himself with some success in the 1780s was a local organ-builder, John Donaldson. Little is known about musical instrument-making in Newcastle in the eighteenth century, although it clearly did continue; the only craftsman of whom any detailed information remains is Matthew Prior, who may have been a descendent of the William Prior who was working in the city at the beginning of the century.<sup>140</sup> Prior was well known to Thomas Bewick, who described him as having ‘the character of being one of the best mechanics in the kingdom – he was Assay Master – musical instrument maker & a turner, in which last he particularly excelled’.<sup>141</sup> Bewick relates Prior’s encounter with a Committee of the House of Commons who were examining him on his abilities as Assay Master, and a wager with a gentleman concerning Prior’s ability to

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<sup>134</sup> TAWS 1269/22, Bewick’s Accounts, 24 February 1783.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 24 February 1783.

<sup>136</sup> NC 6 May 1780.

<sup>137</sup> NRO EP 86/108-9: Vestry Minutes of St. Nicholas’s Church, *passim*.

<sup>138</sup> Co. Co. 27 February 1786.

<sup>139</sup> NC 12 August 1780.

<sup>140</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>141</sup> Bewick, *Memoir*, p. 42.

turn two billiard balls of exactly equal weight.<sup>142</sup> He wrote that Prior ‘was of a most independent cast of character & open & frank in his conversation’.<sup>143</sup> Few details are known of Prior’s work, however; only with Donaldson’s emergence as the first known organ-builder in the city since William Bristowe in the mid-1730s is a clearer picture available about the activities of an instrument maker in the city.

Donaldson, who was certainly of North-Eastern origins and who may have been a Newcastle man, had followed the usual practice for a man with ambition and travelled to London for training. Initially he had set his sights on being a watch- and clock-maker and had ‘spent some years with Mr. Dale of Coldbath Fields, principal Finisher to the celebrated Messrs. Mudge and Dutton, Watchmakers, in Fleet-street’.<sup>144</sup> On his return to Newcastle in the late 1770s, Donaldson appears to have set up two shops, one – a watch-making business – in the Bigg Market and a second not far away in Northumberland Street, where he manufactured organs:

JOHN                      DAVIDSON,                      ORGAN-BUILDER,  
NORTHUMBERLAND   STREET,   Newcastle,   MOST  
respectfully begs Leave to inform the Nobility, Gentry, &c. that  
he makes and repairs all Sorts of Church, Chamber and Barrel  
Organs, to play Psalms, Concertos, Minuets, &c. in the neatest  
Manner, and on the most reasonable Terms.<sup>145</sup>

The watch-making business seems to have been given up relatively early, and during the 1780s Donaldson and his assistant Robert Boston worked on organs throughout the North-East region.<sup>146</sup> They carried out work on all four of Newcastle’s organs, repairing All Saints’ in 1781,<sup>147</sup> building the first organ at St. Andrew’s in 1782-3,<sup>148</sup> carrying out extensive repairs at St. Nicholas’s in 1784-7 during a complete renovation of the

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<sup>142</sup> Bewick, *Memoir*, p. 42.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>144</sup> *NC* 12 August 1780.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Baptismal Registers of All Saints’ Church, Newcastle, 25 November 1787, 22 November 1789.

<sup>147</sup> *NC* 4 August 1781.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 January 1783.

church<sup>149</sup> and working on St. John's in 1785.<sup>150</sup> At the same time Donaldson was working on organs elsewhere in the region. In 1785, he supplied a new organ for the rebuilt Freemasons' Hall (the Phoenix Lodge) in Sunderland, an organ that was opened by Thomas Ebdon with a performance of *Messiah*.<sup>151</sup> The following year, he built an organ for St. Hild's Church, South Shields, which was opened in the same way.<sup>152</sup> He also carried out minor repairs on Stockton parish church after the theft of some pipes at New Year 1784.<sup>153</sup> Work still further afield included a new organ in Whitehaven in 1783,<sup>154</sup> an organ for St. Paul's, Aberdeen, in the same year<sup>155</sup> and another for Bradford parish church.<sup>156</sup> Some of this work may have been obtained through personal contacts; the organist at Whitehaven, Mr. Howgill,<sup>157</sup> may have been related to the Newcastle wait of the same name<sup>158</sup> and the organist at St. Paul's, Aberdeen, at the time of Donaldson's work there was John Ross, previously an apprentice to Matthias Hawdon.

In 1790, for reasons which are not clear, Donaldson decided to move to York; in November of that year the *Newcastle Courant* referred to him as 'Mr. Donaldson of York (late of Newcastle)' when describing his latest and perhaps best-known organ, which was being installed in the Earl of Belvedere's house in Dublin.<sup>159</sup> (The instrument – 16 feet high and in a mahogany case – was built in York and shipped from Whitehaven.)<sup>160</sup> Donaldson took his assistant Robert Boston with him to York and settled at first 'at DONALDSON's Organ Manufactory, *Without Micklegate Bar*',<sup>161</sup>

<sup>149</sup> NRO EP86/120. Minutes of Restoration Committee, St Nicholas's Church, Newcastle, 1 June 1784 *et al.*

<sup>150</sup> TAWS 160/1/120: St John's Vestry Minutes, 22 November 1785.

<sup>151</sup> NC 9 April 1785. The hall had been rebuilt after a fire.

<sup>152</sup> NCh 1 July 1786.

<sup>153</sup> DRO EP/Sto. 38: Vestry Minutes of Stockton parish church, 6 January 1784.

<sup>154</sup> NC 5 April 1783.

<sup>155</sup> S. Bicknell 'The Donaldson Organ in the Holywell Music Room, Oxford', *BIOS, Journal*, II (1987), p. 32.

<sup>156</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>157</sup> NCh 5 April 1783.

<sup>158</sup> Co. Co. 19 December 1751.

<sup>159</sup> NC 27 November 1790. This organ is now in the Holywell Music Room in Oxford. See Bicknell, 'Donaldson Organ'.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 November 1790.

<sup>161</sup> YCh 21 May 1795.

later moving into the centre of the city, to Petergate.<sup>162</sup> A shop was attached to the latter premises, where Donaldson sold piano fortes by ‘BROADWOOD, CULLIFORD, and the other best Makers in London, which he sells at their prices, and warrants their standing in tune’.<sup>163</sup> As before he continued to travel to build and repair organs, including a trip to Pontefract where the organ he built for the parish church was opened in April 1793 with performances of *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Messiah* with Edward Meredith amongst the vocal soloists.<sup>164</sup> He also returned to the North-East in 1792 to carry out repairs on the organ in Durham Cathedral.<sup>165</sup> Although the move to York clearly brought him into direct competition with Thomas Haxby, Donaldson must have believed that the surrounding area offered more work than the hinterland of Newcastle and his apparent prosperity suggests that his judgement was accurate.<sup>166</sup> He became a regular attender at the Music Society in York,<sup>167</sup> was admitted as a freeman of the city in 1797,<sup>168</sup> and by 1800 was sufficiently prominent to be elected a common councilman.<sup>169</sup>

Although Donaldson chose to move from Newcastle, it is clear that it was possible to make a living from musical activities in the city; men such as Thomas Wright and John Thompson were able to maintain themselves and even thrive although they were sometimes forced to undertake a wide variety of activities. Hawdon’s financial difficulties may therefore have been owing in large part to his own mismanagement. Nevertheless, the mid- and late-1780s were to underline the apparent low level of

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<sup>162</sup> YC 10 April 1797.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 10 April 1797.

<sup>164</sup> YCh 14 March 1793.

<sup>165</sup> Co. Co. 16 June 1792.

<sup>166</sup> Although Donaldson competed with Haxby in organ manufacture, he did not expand into piano forte manufacture and repair until after Haxby’s death in 1797.

<sup>167</sup> YRO Acc 30: 1-4, Minute Books, York Musical society, e.g. 1 September 1794.

<sup>168</sup> Malden, *York Freeman*, 1797.

<sup>169</sup> NCh 1 March 1800.



demand for public concert-giving in the city, leading eventually to the abandonment of the subscription series altogether. But before that, Hawdon's connection with the choir of Durham Cathedral was to lead to the almost complete domination of Newcastle's musical life by Durham musicians.

Allegro

# CONCERTO

Volti Subito

Plate 19: Opening page of *A favorite Concerto for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte with Accompaniments* by William Evance (London: Longman and Broderip, c1782).

# 10

## THE SUPREMACY OF DURHAM

### I: Newcastle concerts 1781-3

Hawdon's financial difficulties inevitably affected the concert calendar in Newcastle. In the year of his bankruptcy, 1781, the Race Week concert was abandoned although the Assize Week concert went ahead as usual. The form and content of the latter concert suggests that Hawdon was attempting to make the most of one of the most profitable weeks of the year, in view of the large numbers of visitors in the city. Hawdon hired no fewer than three singers – Meredith, Evance, and Miss Harwood – and used Noferi as leader;<sup>1</sup> Noferi was already in the area to play at the Durham Assize Week concert (the previous week),<sup>2</sup> and put on a concert for his own benefit the day after Hawdon's.

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<sup>1</sup> NC 11 August 1781.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 4 August 1781.

Meredith inevitably was the soloist at this concert too; the programme included a violin concerto and, perhaps unsurprisingly in view of Noferi's position as leader of the Opera House Ballet, extended extracts from ballets and at least three works composed by Noferi, including an unusual work for Spanish guitar, violin and bass.<sup>3</sup> (Appendix 1)

At the end of the year, the subscription series failed to make an appearance; the only concerts in the city before Christmas were the Freemasons' anniversary concert and benefit for Evance and Meredith, an unashamedly populist concert which included 'several of the most admired Catches and Gleees; and (by particular desire) a favourite Medley of imitations, by Mr. Meredith'.<sup>4</sup> Then early in 1782, Hawdon offered a truncated series of three concerts (instead of the usual six): on 10 and 28 January and 28 February.<sup>5</sup> Miss Harwood was no longer in the area and Evance and Meredith took the vocal parts. No programmes were advertised; the only repertoire named are a few folk-songs and the usual catches and gleees between the acts.

Hawdon attempted to cut costs still further by making economies in what must have seemed peripheral matters. He used the smaller of the two rooms in the New Assembly buildings on Westgate Road, saving a guinea on the cost of room hire,<sup>6</sup> and in addition cut down on the number of candles used in the chandeliers. Both these moves annoyed his subscribers and Hawdon added a note to his advertisement for the second concert of the series.

N.B. Mr. Hawdon thinks it his duty to apologize to the very respectable company who honoured his Concert on Thursday last, that the smallness of the number of Subscribers, and the coldness of the Weather, induced him to take the liberty to accommodate them within the lesser Room, which he flattered himself would not have been on that Account objected to ...<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> NC 4 August 1781.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 13 November 1781.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5 January, 19 January, 16 February 1782.

<sup>6</sup> TAWS 160/82 Accounts of the New Assembly Rooms, 10 January, 28 January, 26 February 1782. The large room cost 2 guineas to hire, the smaller 1 guinea.

<sup>7</sup> NC 12 January 1782.

Nevertheless, it had been objected to; Hawdon bowed to pressure and promised: ‘in future it will be in the Great Room, and ... the Lustres fully illuminated.’<sup>8</sup>

Financial restraints again restricted Hawdon’s concert-promotion the following year (1782). The Race Week concert was abandoned but the Assize Week concert went ahead with Meredith and Evance as vocal soloists.<sup>9</sup> This was a subdued affair, bearing more resemblance to a normal subscription series concert than to the elaborate Assize Concerts of the late 1770s. Evance and Meredith again held a benefit in December at the New Assembly Rooms but even Meredith’s attractions may not have been sufficient to attract a good audience; they did not repeat the concert in succeeding years.<sup>10</sup> The winter subscription series was again limited to three concerts between January and March 1783; Bewick’s accounts indicate that Hawdon anticipated a maximum of fifty subscribers and allowed for fifty people turning up on the night.<sup>11</sup> This series was apparently rather more successful than the series the previous year; it was indirectly helped by the political situation and the ending of the American War. Hawdon wrote an *Ode on the Present Peace* for Meredith to sing in the second concert; from the words the uninformed listener might have concluded that Britain had won the war:

Britons rejoice! At length by valour free’d  
Majestic Albion rears her drooping head,  
By woes made greater, see! Sublime she stands,  
Snatches fresh laurels from oppressive hands:  
Destruction on her helm, in dreadful pride,  
See Fate and Victory attend her Side!

What mattered most, apparently, was the effect on the city’s trade; the last verse of the *Ode* ran:

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<sup>8</sup> NC 12 January 1782.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 20 July 1782.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 30 November 1782.

<sup>11</sup> TAWS 1269/12, Bewick’s Accounts, 9 January 1783.

Thy blessings, peace, again restor'd,  
Soon shall our Albion see,  
Her ports enrich'd by foreign trade,  
Her sons by public virtue made,  
Illustrious, great, and free.<sup>12</sup>

The *Ode*, or Meredith's rendering of it, was popular enough to warrant a repeat in the third concert.<sup>13</sup>

Hawdon may have had hopes of a recovery in 1783 following this series. He was fortunate enough to be able to hire a celebrity for the Assize Week concert – the violinist, Salomon. Salomon was travelling to London from Edinburgh where, according to the *Newcastle Courant*, 'it was astonishing to see the company that resorted to the Concerts which he led, and where he never failed to give fresh proof of his amazing, and unrivalled abilities'.<sup>14</sup> The playing of 'this performer ... generally allowed to be the best Violin Player in Europe' was evidently 'highly applauded',<sup>15</sup> although the *Courant* was naïve in attributing Hawdon's reasons for hiring Salomon to 'a pure motive of obliging his friends'.<sup>16</sup> The vocal soloists at this concert were, inevitably, Meredith and Evance.

## II: Competition

In the autumn of 1783 Hawdon faced competition from an unexpected source. Earlier in the year, an organ (built by Donaldson) had been installed in St. Andrew's Church and Hawdon's youngest son, Thomas (about eighteen years old at this time) was appointed organist.<sup>17</sup> Thomas had followed what was by now an established pattern for North-

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<sup>12</sup> *NC* 8 February 1783.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 March 1783.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 August 1783.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>16</sup> *NC* 9 August 1783.

<sup>17</sup> *NCh* 18 January 1783; *Co. Co.* 20 January 1783.

Eastern musicians with any ambitions and had spent some time in London for a ‘regular and Scientific Education in the Science of Music’.<sup>18</sup> The St. Andrew’s post was clearly only a first step towards more prestigious jobs and Thomas stayed only six months at the St Andrew’s post before leaving for another position in Dundee.<sup>19</sup> The job at St. Andrew’s was re-advertised; one of the two candidates for the post was Robert Barber.<sup>20</sup>

Since leaving Newcastle for his appointment as organist of St. Paul’s in Aberdeen in mid-1774, Barber had not had an entirely happy time; he had even had to face a murder attempt ‘in the middle of the night, whilst in bed’, when attacked by a man with a sword less than a fortnight before his (Barber’s) marriage.<sup>21</sup> He was apparently so eager to leave Aberdeen that he gave up his job there before being sure of the Newcastle post; he failed to be elected. The successful applicant, George Barren, was a younger man and seemingly less experienced; not long after his appointment, he applied to the Corporation for permission to go to London to study, returning six months later.<sup>22</sup> He produced at least one keyboard piece: *The German Spa, A favorite Country Dance Adapted as A RONDO for the Piano-Forte or Harpsichord*.<sup>23</sup>

Barber found himself in the same uneasy, insecure position as he had faced ten years previously. In June 1783, not long after his return, he advertised himself as a teacher of organ, harpsichord and piano and offered his own compositions for sale.<sup>24</sup> He also advertised for an apprentice, although it is not clear whether he obtained one.<sup>25</sup> A month later he offered musical instruments for hire as well as for sale, but his advertisement indicates that he had still not yet found anywhere permanent to live and

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<sup>18</sup> NC 29 November 1786.

<sup>19</sup> Co. Co. 19 June 1783.

<sup>20</sup> NC 21 June 1783.

<sup>21</sup> NCh 3 May 1777: NC 17 May 1777.

<sup>22</sup> Co. Co. 19 June 1783, 17 December 1783.

<sup>23</sup> Published by Preston of London: no date.

<sup>24</sup> NC 7 June 1783.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 21 June 1783.

was directing correspondence to the family business, now being run by his brother.<sup>26</sup> His frequent references to his superior qualifications – ‘his being several years under the principal Performers ... in London and elsewhere’ and ‘having just ... returned from Aberdeen where he was lately Organist’<sup>27</sup> – suggest that he may have been having difficulty in establishing himself.

Late in 1783, Barber seems to have decided that Hawdon’s truncated subscription series left a gap in the market and offered his own three-concert series to take place on 27 November and 17 December 1783, and 8 January 1784.<sup>28</sup> Meredith and Evance sang the vocal parts, Robinson and Ashton were leader and principal cellist respectively. Little is known of the repertoire played except that it included Barber’s own compositions – the first concert began with Barber’s setting of Dryden’s *Ode to St. Cecilia*.<sup>29</sup> Barber played a harpsichord concerto in the first concert,<sup>30</sup> Robinson a violin concerto by Giardini in the second,<sup>31</sup> and all four singing men sang glees in the second and third concerts.<sup>32</sup> The series was probably not particularly profitable; Barber did not advertise again in Newcastle and by 1785 was settled in Manchester.<sup>33</sup> His successor as organist in Aberdeen, appointed just before the first of the three concerts, was an apprentice of Hawdon’s, John Ross.<sup>34</sup>

Hawdon’s own series began almost exactly a month after Barber’s ended and further strengthened the grip that Durham musicians were beginning to establish on music making in Newcastle; the series of three concerts in February and March 1784

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<sup>26</sup> NC 16 August 1783.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 16 August 1783.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 15 November, 13 December 1783, 3 January 1784.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 15 November 1783.

<sup>30</sup> Idem.

<sup>31</sup> NC 13 December 1783.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 13 December 1783, 3 January 1784.

<sup>33</sup> YC 5 July 1785.

<sup>34</sup> NC 1 November 1783. Ross remained at Aberdeen for the rest of his life, for an account of his career there see H.G. Farmer, *Music-Making in the Olden Days. The Story of the Aberdeen Concerts 1748-1801* (London: Hinrichsen, n.d.).



was run jointly by Hawdon and Thomas Ebdon, in an arrangement reminiscent of that between Ebdon and Garth a decade and a half before.<sup>35</sup> Ebdon's concert-giving activities were very extended at this period. The concert series in Durham was thriving with approximately six concerts given at monthly intervals from October until January or February at a subscription rate of half a guinea.<sup>36</sup> The first concert of each series – of vocal and instrumental music – was held at the Red Lion; the second – usually a choral work – at Ebdon's own rooms in the Bailey. (Table 10.1)

**Table 10.1: Durham Subscription Concerts 1781-9**

Season		Concert	Venue	Repertoire
1781-2	2 October	first	Red Lion	Vocal and Instrumental
	16 October	second	Ebdon's rooms	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
	19 January	last	Red Lion	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
1782-3	8 October	first	Red Lion	Vocal and Instrumental
	22 October	second	Ebdon's rooms	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
1783-4	7 October	first	Red Lion	Vocal and Instrumental
	21 October	second	Ebdon's rooms	<i>Solomon</i> (Boyce)
1784-5	5 October	first	Red Lion	Vocal and Instrumental
	19 October	second	Ebdon's rooms	[unknown]
	8 February	last	Red Lion	<i>Solomon</i> (Boyce)
1785-6	4 October	first	Red Lion	Vocal and Instrumental
	18 October	second	Ebdon's rooms	[unknown]
1786-7	3 October	first	Red Lion	Vocal and Instrumental
	16 January	seventh	Ebdon's rooms	[unknown]
	29 January	eighth	Red Lion	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>
1787-8	2 October	first	Red Lion	Vocal and Instrumental
	16 October	second	Ebdon's rooms	[unknown]
1788-9	7 October	first	Red Lion	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
1789-70	6 October	first	Ebdon's rooms	Vocal and Instrumental
	27 October	second	[unknown]	[unknown]

<sup>35</sup> NC 17 January 1784.

<sup>36</sup> e.g. NC 2 October 1784.

The choral repertoire was still limited, consisting of repeated performances of *Alexander's Feast*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Acis and Galatea*, and Boyce's *Solomon*.<sup>37</sup> Almost nothing is known of the repertoire played at the vocal and instrumental concerts; a review of the opening night of the 1785-6 season provides the only available information:

A correspondent from Durham informs us, that the first night of Mr. Ebdon's concerts for the winter Season, on Tuesday se'nnight, was attended by a very numerous and elegant audience. The performers seemed to vie with each other in contributing to the entertainment of the company; Mr. Hackwood, of the Opera-house, played the first violin, and displayed his great taste and execution; Messrs. Meredith and Evance highly distinguishing themselves by the exertion of their vocal powers, especially in the celebrated songs of *Honour and Arms*, in Sampson, and *Let not Age*, &c. by Geminiani, indeed the whole of the performance met with the greatest approbation and applause.<sup>38</sup>

Hackwood's presence, unadvertised in the advance publicity for the concert, may indicate that Durham audiences saw more visiting musicians than is immediately apparent; Hackwood may have come to the area through his connection with Noferi at the Opera House in London and he continued to visit the North-East occasionally until the early 1790s.<sup>39</sup> His last known appearance in the area was as principal violist in the Durham Music Festival of 1792.<sup>40</sup>

Ebdon continued to hold concerts in Sunderland, organising the winter subscription series and the King's birthday concert (4 June) throughout the decade. In addition, he provided other concerts in the town for special occasions such as the dedication in 1785 of the new Freemasons' Hall which was celebrated with a performance of *Messiah*.<sup>41</sup> He may have seen his collaboration with Hawdon in

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<sup>37</sup> NC 22 September 1781, 19 January 1782, 28 September 1782, 4 October 1788; NCh 27 September 1783, 5 February 1785, 13 January 1787.

<sup>38</sup> NC 15 October 1785.

<sup>39</sup> Idem.

<sup>40</sup> NC 13 October 1792.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 5 March 1785.

Newcastle as a way of extending his activities further afield; Hawdon's reasons for entering into the partnership are less clear but it is possible that he was already suffering from the ill-health that eventually caused his death six years later. The *Newcastle Courant* thought the collaboration promising; it remarked that 'it may be expected such a junction will, in all probability, afford much entertainment to the musical public'.<sup>42</sup>

The series organised jointly by the two men in early 1784 was very little different from Barber's. Meredith and Evance sang the vocal parts, Robinson and Ashton filled the principal orchestral roles and the Gentlemen and boys of the Choir sang the choruses. In effect, the Durham Cathedral band had been transplanted to Newcastle.<sup>43</sup> The Newcastle musicians may have filled rank-and-file roles, about which no information survives; none were advertised as soloists. The result was a subscription series that was in effect an extended oratorio festival, closely resembling those of 1779 and 1781. (Table 10.2)

**Table 10.2: 1784 Newcastle subscription series<sup>44</sup>**

Tuesday	10 February	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>
Tuesday	24 February	Miscellaneous concert with Handel's Coronation Anthem and other choruses
Tuesday	9 March	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>

Only a month later, Hawdon and Ebdon collaborated again to produce another two oratorios in the week before Easter. The three concerts of the subscription series had presented the lighter works of the repertoire; the Lent series appropriately featured the more serious works – *Judas Maccabaeus* (and the Coronation Anthem) on 6 April and *Messiah* on 7 April. A female singer, Miss Wrigley, was brought in from Lancashire but

<sup>42</sup> NC 13 December 1783.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 17 January, 21 February, 28 February 1784.

<sup>44</sup> Idem.

in all other respects the Cathedral personnel – Evance, Meredith, Ashton and Robinson – dominated the performances.<sup>45</sup>

In this early part of 1784, Hawdon was relatively active; in addition to the oratorio concerts, he continued to teach and to compose – he published a set of organ voluntaries in May.<sup>46</sup> He sold instruments from time to time and advertised for a new apprentice to fill John Ross's place.<sup>47</sup> He held the Assize Concert as usual in August, another concert influenced heavily by the involvement of the Durham Choir; the music played included the *Hallelujah Chorus* and the Coronation Anthem.<sup>48</sup> No subscription series was held over the winter and in the New Year concert-goers had to wait until February for entertainment. In collaboration with Ebdon and with the use of the entire band of singers from Durham, Hawdon then put on a single performance of *Messiah* at the New Assembly Rooms on Westgate Road – 'the whole to be accompanied with Horns, Trumpets, and Kettle Drums'.<sup>49</sup>

The field was left open for Ebdon and for Edward Meredith. By this time Meredith was the almost indispensable soloist in concerts in Newcastle. In March 1784, he had been the recipient of a benefit from the Gentlemen of the Forest Hunt;<sup>50</sup> on 24 June, he entertained the Freemasons at their annual Festival.<sup>51</sup> In November, he sang an anthem (accompanied by charity school children) at a sermon in All Saints Church for the benefit of 'women lying-in at their own homes'.<sup>52</sup> His appearance at the oratorios in February 1785 was followed in March by another benefit from the Gentlemen of the Forest Hunt.<sup>53</sup> On 24 June he (and 'others in the musical line') again favoured the

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<sup>45</sup> *NCh* 27 March 1784.

<sup>46</sup> *NC* 29 May 1784. *Six Sonatas Spirituale Or Voluntaries for the Harpsichord, Organ or Piano Forte* (London: John Preston, 1784).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 May 1784.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 July 1784.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 January 1785.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 March 1784.

<sup>51</sup> *NCh* 12 June 1785.

<sup>52</sup> *NC* 13 November 1784.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 March 1785.

Freemasons with 'some favourite Pieces of Music';<sup>54</sup> the Stewards of the Races gave him a benefit on the same evening.<sup>55</sup> In July, Matthias Hawdon was forced to apologise for Meredith's absence from his Assize Concert:

Mr. Hawdon presents his most dutiful respects to the Ladies and Gentlemen, and is sorry to inform them that it is out of his power to engage Mr. Meredith, he having an engagement in Edinburgh.<sup>56</sup>

Meredith had returned by the beginning of August and sang at a Newcastle benefit for Mr. Galot on 15 August.<sup>57</sup> After another five weeks leave of absence,<sup>58</sup> during which his whereabouts are unknown, he was back for the anniversary festival for the Freemasons in October<sup>59</sup> and for another benefit for Galot at which he was accompanied by William Evance.<sup>60</sup> In December, he and Ebdon advertised that they would be running the next subscription series in Newcastle.<sup>61</sup>

The way for this series had been cleared by Hawdon who sent a notice to the *Newcastle Courant* at the beginning of the month:

M. HAWDON most respectfully returns thanks to his Friends, who have favoured his endeavours in carrying on, hitherto, the Winter Concerts; it would have given him a particular satisfaction, and have encouraged his future endeavours, had the support been more general, but as it has not of late been any way adequate to the expence, he sincerely hopes his intention of declining them will give no offence to his Friends, or the town in general.<sup>62</sup>

Hawdon's advertisement may have been intended to stress that the Durham men were not in competition with him and to reassure his supporters that they would not be

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<sup>54</sup> *NCh* 11 June, 18 June 1785. 'Brother Meredith will sing an Anthem accompanied with the Organ.'

<sup>55</sup> *NC* 18 June 1785.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 July 1785.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 August 1785.

<sup>58</sup> *CA DAB* 3 September 1785.

<sup>59</sup> *NC* 15 October 1785.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 October 1785.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 December 1785.

<sup>62</sup> *Idem.*

accused of disloyalty if they supported the series put on by Ebdon and Meredith. The advertisement for the series inserted in local papers the following week offered a series of four concerts, held monthly from 19 December, for a half-guinea subscription or 3s. 6d. a night. The concerts were described as ‘of vocal and instrumental music’ and ‘the celebrated Music in MACBETH’ was performed in both the first and last concerts.<sup>63</sup> Soloists are named only in connection with the last concert – Meredith, the boys of the choir, and Mrs. Peile, an actress.<sup>64</sup> It is clear that this was the Durham band in all but name; Durham musicians, it appeared, had taken over Newcastle’s music-making and, in view of Hawdon’s publicly expressed withdrawal from concert-promotion, looked set to dominate for some time to come.

Their domination was, however, short-lived. Despite the *Newcastle Courant*’s assurances that the first concert was ‘honored with a numerous and genteel company’<sup>65</sup> and the second with ‘a numerous and brilliant company’,<sup>66</sup> the series was the first and last put on in Newcastle by Ebdon and Meredith. It seems unlikely that Ebdon, with all his experience of successful concert-promotion in Durham and Sunderland, should have allowed expenses to spiral out of control. Hawdon’s advertisement of early December 1885 may have been prophetic in saying that the support was not in ‘any way adequate to the expense’ of a winter series.

Ebdon never held another concert in Newcastle and Meredith’s stay in the North-East was limited. For another two years he continued in much the same way as before, singing in concerts in Durham, Newcastle, South Shields, Stockton, Sunderland and Morpeth. His frequent benefits continued – from the Stewards of the Races,<sup>67</sup> the Gentlemen of the Forest Hunt in Newcastle,<sup>68</sup> the Gentlemen of the Sunderland

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<sup>63</sup> NC 10 December 1785, 4 March 1786.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 4 March 1786.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 24 December 1785.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 21 January 1786.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 10 June 1786.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 25 March 1786.

Hunt<sup>69</sup> and other bodies. But during these years, Meredith was expanding his activities outside the North-East, making more frequent appearances in concerts in York,<sup>70</sup> Leeds, and the Lancashire/Yorkshire area in general.<sup>71</sup> In 1788, he made the decision to leave Durham. He took his Newcastle benefit from the Gentlemen of the Forest Hunt in March,<sup>72</sup> sang in a benefit for Thomas Wright in Morpeth in April,<sup>73</sup> and in the King's Birthday concert in Sunderland in June,<sup>74</sup> all the while shuttling backwards and forwards to Leeds for the subscription series there<sup>75</sup> and, possibly, fulfilling his ecclesiastical duties. His salary at the Cathedral was last paid at the end of the second quarter of 1788,<sup>76</sup> then Meredith departed to Liverpool leaving debts owing to Bewick for the printing of concert tickets unpaid.<sup>77</sup>

### III: Decline and death

The dominance of Durham musicians in Newcastle during the first half of the 1780s, with its concomitant effect on the repertoire heard in concerts – the much greater emphasis on vocal music which turned Newcastle concerts into a mirror image of those in Durham – was undoubtedly owing in large part to Edward Meredith's popularity. Hawdon's financial difficulties, which would largely preclude the hiring of expensive soloists from further afield, increased the impetus to use Meredith and others from the Cathedral although towards the end of his stay in the area, Meredith's fee may have been high.

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<sup>69</sup> NC 15 April 1786.

<sup>70</sup> YC 6 February, 13 March 1787.

<sup>71</sup> Hargrave, pp. 342-44.

<sup>72</sup> NC 8 March 1788.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 22 March 1788.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 31 May 1788.

<sup>75</sup> Hargrave, p. 344.

<sup>76</sup> CA TA, 1777-8 passim.

<sup>77</sup> TAWS 1269/12 Bewick's Accounts, 20 April 1791, 7 January 1788, 24 March 1787.

A further complication reduced Hawdon's effectiveness as a concert-promoter – his increasingly bad health. His thanks to the public for their support of his Assize Concert in August 1786 – the only regular concert he continued to hold – included an apology 'for not [being] able (from indisposition) to appear himself'.<sup>78</sup> This concert is notable for being the first recorded occasion on which Hawdon hired Thomas Wright as a soloist; Wright played a clarinet concerto – the concert was led as usual by Thomas Robinson of Durham. The withdrawal of Ebdon and Meredith meant there was no subscription series in early 1787 but Hawdon put on a single concert in mid-February; with typical ineptitude he sought to assure readers of the *Newcastle Courant* and other papers that he was trying to satisfy all tastes:

Mr. Hawdon hopes it will meet with approbation, that this performance is intended to consist principally of Vocal Music. N.B. No expense will be spared to effect a full Instrumental band.<sup>79</sup>

All the Durham principals appeared, with an actress, Mrs. Hesker, providing additional vocal parts; Thomas Wright played a clarinet concerto. The programme was of vocal and instrumental music, bearing a great resemblance to the early concerts of Hawdon's first two series. Symphonies by Haydn (their first known appearance in Newcastle), orchestral pieces by Avison and Wright, and songs by Handel, Hook and Paxton were performed. The Assize Concert six months later repeated the formula almost identically; in the absence of Mrs Hesker (the theatre company was not in town), the new singing man, John Friend, joined his colleagues in glees. Wright again provided a clarinet concerto – a fixed feature of almost every concert in Newcastle from this period onward.

By 1788, musical activity in Newcastle was at a very low ebb. Hawdon gave no concerts in the early part of the year; Meredith held his usual benefit from the

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<sup>78</sup> NC 19 August 1786.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 3 February 1787.



Gentlemen of the Forest Hunt in March,<sup>80</sup> and a much applauded and popular notable, the composer and performer Charles Dibdin, arrived for a short visit. Visitors to Newcastle had been few and far between for some years, although the idiosyncratic James Bryson had caused a brief excitement in early 1785 by exhibiting his children 'who are so justly stiled A MUSICAL PHENONENON', organising a concert for them, setting them to play at the theatre and throwing his lodgings open for any one who cared to turn up and demand a performance from the children.<sup>81</sup> (The youngest was evidently only three years old and 'can play upwards of thirty tunes, to the wonder of the hearers'.)<sup>82</sup> Dibdin's arrival, almost exactly three years later, was part of a musical tour of the country. He gave two readings in the Long Room of the Turk's Head in the Bigg Market; various extracts (whose origins are unknown) were interspersed with music 'and an astonishing variety of songs'.<sup>83</sup> So successful were these entertainments that Dibdin immediately repeated them a few days later. He also canvassed subscriptions for an unnamed publication. The *Newcastle Chronicle* was astonished by his abilities, remarking that:

Mr. Dibdin's fame as a performer is too well established to require the aid of our feeble panegyric; yet it is but justice in return for the delightful entertainment we received from him, to say, we have never seen more applause bestowed on my performance ... not any more deservedly. The Songs which are, we believe, all of his own writing and composing, are extremely beautiful, and were sung in the most enchanting stile. Indeed the powers of harmony seem so congenial to his faculties that in a performance which lasted upwards of two hours, he neither appeared in any respect fatigued, nor was the delightful mellowness of his voice in the least altered, though the number of songs could not be less than thirty.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *NC* 8 March 1788.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 February, 26 February 1785.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 February 1785.

<sup>83</sup> *NCh* 23 February 1788.

<sup>84</sup> *Idem.*

In July, Hawdon held his Assize Week Concert as usual.<sup>85</sup> Meredith had left the city by this time, but his departure did not much affect the format or content of the concert which consisted largely of overtures and choruses from Handel's oratorios, concluding with the Coronation Anthem. Thomas Wright played a clarinet concerto and the second act ended with a symphony by Haydn. The vocal soloists were William Evance and Meredith's replacement, John Reynolds, and in addition two choristers from the Cathedral who sang a duet by Ebdon.<sup>86</sup> It is possible that Ebdon himself took part in the concert; the programme seems to suggest he sang a duet with one of the choristers – if so, this is the only recorded occasion on which Ebdon sang at a concert.

By November of that year, Hawdon's health was clearly much worse:

M. HAWDON most respectfully begs Leave to acquaint his Friends and the Public, that his late indisposition having rendered it difficult for him, as well as prejudicial to his health, to pay his usual close Attention to his Pupils, and to prevent the painful Idea which the least neglect of his duty to the Publick, however involuntary, would occasion in him, he has formed a junction with his Son, who has quitted his Engagements at Hull for that purpose, and whose abilities he flatters himself, will give every Satisfaction to his Employers, and merit the favour of this public; as he went through a regular and Scientific Education in the Science of Music under one of the first Professors in London.<sup>87</sup>

The son in question was Thomas, whose stay in Dundee had lasted only four years. About a year previously, he had moved to his father's old post at Holy Trinity, Hull where he had promptly fallen in love with the daughter of Mr. Webster the vicar.<sup>88</sup> Although he did not immediately give up the post at Hull, Thomas returned to Newcastle to assist his father and he may have regarded the move as a good one financially, as he was clearly stepping into a ready-made teaching practice. He was too late, however, to

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<sup>85</sup> NC 19 July 1788.

<sup>86</sup> Meredith's replacement frequently appeared in advertisements as Mr. Reinholds or Rheinhold. In Cathedral records, however, he is always referred to as Reynolds.

<sup>87</sup> NC 29 November 1788.

<sup>88</sup> NJ 22 December 1787.

help relieve his father's failing health; six months later, Matthias Hawdon died of what the *Newcastle Advertiser* called 'a lingering illness'.<sup>89</sup> The *Newcastle Courant* said, with optimism that was not to be justified, that '[his] compositions will ever be esteemed'.<sup>90</sup> Despite his long experience as a teacher and as a concert-promoter, Hawdon had failed to maintain a viable concert-series in the city and had embarked on a course which brought financial disaster on himself and an almost complete end to public concerts in the city. His use of musicians from Durham had briefly established them as predominant in Newcastle with a marked effect on the repertoire heard in concerts.

It is, however, harsh to blame the parlous state of concert-giving in Newcastle at the end of the 1780s entirely on Hawdon. Thomas Ebdon, equally experienced in concert-promotion and at the time conducting apparently flourishing subscription series in Durham and Sunderland, also failed to put on a successful series in Newcastle. Both Hawdon and Ebdon were fighting against a continuing decline in demand for concerts that had begun with, or at least been provoked by, Charles Avison's death. Newcastle was not alone in its difficulties; the 1770s and 1780s also saw a fresh outbreak of financial problems for the subscription series in York and the beginning of a slow but apparently inexorable decline in public music-making in that city.

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<sup>89</sup> *NA* 21 March 1789.

<sup>90</sup> *NC* 21 March 1789.

YORK, October 13, 1775.

**THE SUBSCRIPTION CONCERTS**

commence on Friday the 3d of November next, consisting of Twenty-one Nights each Year.

*Triennial Tickets* Three Guineas each, one to be paid annually, and transferable to any not residing in York.

*Annual Tickets* One Guinea each, not transferable.

*Nightly Tickets* 2 s. 6 d. each.

The First Violin by Mr. SHAW, jun. from Bath.

The Vocal Part by Mrs. HUDSON.

After the CONCERT will be a BALL.

[To begin at Half past Six o'Clock.]

The Triennial Subscribers are requested to pay their Proportion annually at Mr. HAXBY's Music Shop in Blake-street, York, where Subscriptions will be taken in.

Plate 20: Advertisement for York subscription series, 1775 [YC 17 October 1775].

# 11

**YORK: 1770-1789**

## **I: Music societies in York and the North-East**

Musical Societies were widespread in the North-East. One of Edward Meredith's many benefits, for instance, had been given to him in April 1786 by the Sunderland Musical Society.<sup>1</sup> Little is known about this body. Bewick mentions its members a few times in his accounts; he engraved a medal for them in 1777<sup>2</sup> and two years later provided them with an engraved plate from which tickets could be printed.<sup>3</sup> The Society subscribed to Ebdon's *Sacred Music* in 1790 and to *New Scotch Music* by George Jenkins in 1793,<sup>4</sup> and in the early 1790s it held regular private Sunday evening concerts of sacred music at the Freemasons' Hall. The members of the society were described as 'Gentlemen' but

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<sup>1</sup> NC 15 April 1756.

<sup>2</sup> TAWS 1269/1 Bewick's Accounts, 18 September 1777.

<sup>3</sup> TAWS 1269/22 Bewick's Accounts, 4 October 1779.

<sup>4</sup> Burchell, 'Musical Societies', p. 38.

their leader was a professional musician, Mr. Brown, leader of the North Shields Theatre Company, of whose playing the *Newcastle Courant* commented: 'we are at a loss which to admire most, his justness of tone, sweetness of expression, or boldness of execution'.<sup>5</sup>

In Newcastle, musical societies had been active since at least the middle of the century and it may have been from these societies that the winter subscription series and the Spring Gardens concerts sprang.<sup>6</sup> But Eneas Mackenzie, writing in his 1827 guide to the city, is surely confused in his account of a society organised by Dr. Brown, vicar of Newcastle.

When Dr. Brown became vicar of Newcastle in 1761, he zealously co-operated with his friend, the celebrated Charles Avison, in reviving a taste for music in Newcastle. He added a room to the vicarage-house for the accommodation of his musical friends at his Sunday evening concerts, at which the late Mr. Hesleton of Durham, Dr. Rotheram, the late Mrs. Ord of Fenham, the late Ralph Beilby of Newcastle, and many other amateurs assisted.<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to envisage James Hesletine co-operating in any body which included Charles Avison, and Mackenzie's claim that the subscription series grew out of this society is quite simply wrong. Moreover, a musical society existed in the city as early as the 1740s when it subscribed to works by Avison and Hebdon.<sup>8</sup> Moore's musical society in the Close has already been noted and in 1764 a musical catch-club was also proposed; it is not clear whether this ever came into being or if so, how long it lasted.<sup>9</sup> Even less is known of musical societies in Durham, although one certainly existed in the 1740s when it too subscribed to works by Avison (1742) and Hebden (1745).<sup>10</sup> The 'Concert-Choir at Durham' also subscribed to a publication in 1763.<sup>11</sup>

In York, a confusion in terminology persisted throughout the century. A

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<sup>5</sup> NC 19 March 1791. For music in local theatre companies see Chapter 12.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>7</sup> Mackenzie, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, p. 590.

<sup>8</sup> Burchell, 'Musical Societies', p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> NC 1 September 1764.

<sup>10</sup> Burchell, 'Musical Societies', p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Idem.

‘Musical Society’ subscribed to Festing’s Op. 3 in 1739 and was still buying various works in the 1770s.<sup>12</sup> The ‘Music Assembly’ subscribed separately to another Festing work (Op. 2) in 1731 and, to cause even further confusion, ‘the Concert in Blake Street in York’ subscribed to overtures by Barsanti in 1745. The ‘Concert in York’ subscribed to symphonies in 1773 and the ‘Musical Club in York’ to Matthias Hawdon’s *Ode on the King of Prussia* in c1760. (Table 11.1) This confusion may simply have been caused by the casual use of names by individual members given the task of making subscriptions.

**Table 11.1: Musical Societies subscribing to music publications<sup>13</sup>**

	1731	1733	1734	1739	1744	1745	1760	1770	1782
Catch-club of York									X
Concert at York		X							
Concert at Blake St. York						X			
Musick Assembly	X		X						
Music Club at York							X		
Music Society			X	X	X	X		X	

The records of one of these bodies, known as the Musical Society, survive from 1767 until 1798 and allow a glimpse of the activities of one such organisation. The records are not complete; none remain for the period 1772-1786, and for the latter part of the period they consist principally of attendance lists. The Society consisted of both performing and non-performing members, the numbers of each being strictly regulated – in 1769 a proposed new member was refused admission because there were no vacancies for non-performing members.<sup>14</sup> Performing members were greatly in the majority; in 1776, for instance, a proposal was put forward to increase the number of non-performing members to twelve, at a time when the usual attendance appears to have been between

<sup>12</sup> Burchell, ‘Musical Societies’, p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Information for this table taken from Burchell, ‘Musical Societies’, p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> YRO York Musical Society, Minute Book, 23 October 1769.

28 and 30.<sup>15</sup> Non-attendances and the frequent presence of casual visitors make it difficult to calculate precisely the number of members, but membership clearly steadily grew throughout the period covered from around 25 in 1767 to about 40 in 1772 and 57 in 1796.<sup>16</sup> Performing members included many of the professional musicians in the city: John Camidge, William Hudson, Thomas Haxby, Miles Coyle, Matthew Camidge (John's son) and a number of others. The lists provide some of the scant evidence that singing men from the Minster took part in secular music-making; in addition to Haxby, two other singing men – Joseph and John Wolstenholme (both singing men in the early 1760s)<sup>17</sup> – were members. But a substantial number of the performing members were amateurs, including professional men such as clergymen and doctors.

The Society met weekly throughout the year (except in December) on Monday nights. Many of these meetings took place at a dancing school in the Minster Yard – the dancing master, Mr. Tate, was also a member. In 1796, John Marsh of Salisbury, on a visit to York, was taken by Mr. Beverley, Steward of the Assembly Rooms in Blake Street, to one of the Society's meetings. He noted in his journal:

[he took me] ... to a weekly music meeting at a dancing master's room ... where I found a small band led by Mr. Camidge, sev'l amongst of which were some gentlemen performers on the flute, who took the flute and hautboy parts, who all when the music ended (which chiefly consisted of symphonies of Haydn etc.) went into another room to supper.<sup>18</sup>

Scores were generally supplied to the Society by the shop run by Samuel Knapton, Haxby's apprentice and successor, who was also a member.<sup>19</sup> In 1770, the Society subscribed to Jomelli's *La Passione*,<sup>20</sup> and bought concertos by Giardini and symphonies by Abel and Richter in November 1771.<sup>21</sup> A member of the society

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<sup>15</sup> YRO York Musical Society, Minute Book, 4 June 1776.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., passim.

<sup>17</sup> H9/1 11 November 1751; H9/3 26 January 1785.

<sup>18</sup> Brian Robins, *The John Marsh Journals*, p. 625.

<sup>19</sup> YRO York Musical Society, Minute Book, passim.

<sup>20</sup> Burchell, 'Musical Societies', p. 42.

<sup>21</sup> YRO York Musical Society, Minute Book, 16 September 1771, 11 November 1771.



presented it with two sets of 'Geminiani Corelli's Concertos' in 1794.<sup>22</sup> The purchase of Giardini's concertos may have been prompted by personal contacts; he attended the society's meetings at least twice in September 1769 while visiting the area for the Race Week concerts.<sup>23</sup>

## **II: The winter subscription series 1770-1781 – from Gentlemen Amateurs to professional Musicians**

In the early 1770s the winter subscription series remained in the hands of the Musick Assembly. In the 1769-70 season, twenty-one concerts were arranged so that ten fell before Christmas and eleven after, with the usual four benefits in the New Year: for Mrs. Hudson, Coyle, Camidge and the Musick Assembly itself.<sup>24</sup> In April, Thomas Thackray was the sole inheritor of the benefit that had previously been run with Shaw and Hudson; the benefits continued until around 1774.<sup>25</sup> Giardini was still the leader in the Race Week benefits<sup>26</sup> and the city saw the occasional visitor such as Mr. Noel who was still travelling around the country with his musical inventions.<sup>27</sup>

In 1773, financial problems resurfaced with regard to the running of the winter series. The subscription, which had been fixed at 15s (2s. 6d. for single tickets), was increased to one guinea 'as the late subscriptions have been found greatly insufficient to support the present Expences of the Concert'.<sup>28</sup> The measure was clearly not effective; the following March, a month and a half before the end of the series and four days before the annual benefit for the Musick Assembly, the *York Courant* printed a proposed

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<sup>22</sup> YRO York Musical Society, Minute Book, 13 January 1794.

<sup>23</sup> YRO York Musical Society, Minute Book, 18 September 1769.

<sup>24</sup> YC 17 October 1769.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 10 April 1770.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 7 August 1770.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1 May 1770.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 19 October 1773.

new financial arrangement for the next year's concerts. No change was made to the cost of subscription or to the method of payment, which was to remain annual. However, the Directors of the Musick Assembly asked subscribers to commit themselves to subscribing for three years, calling the new tickets a 'Triennial Subscription'. The advertisement stated that this guaranteed income was necessary in order to engage certain performers – 'no Performer of Note will chuse to engage for a shorter Time than three years'.<sup>29</sup> As no 'Performers of Note' are recorded in advertisements for the preceding subscription series, the Triennial Subscription may have been intended to fund more ambitious plans for the future or to pay for the presence of Giardini and such singers as Savoy during Race Week Concerts.

Miles Coyle gave his last benefit in February 1775<sup>30</sup> and may have died shortly afterwards as did Joseph Shaw, owner of the music shop in Coney Street. Shaw died of gout in the stomach;<sup>31</sup> he had been the performer of many cello concertos in benefits, his last recorded performance being at Camidge's concert the previous year.<sup>32</sup> His shop was offered for sale with all its stock in May but was apparently not sold;<sup>33</sup> his widow ran it until at least early August<sup>34</sup> but there is no record of its existence after that time.

Coyle's death or retirement left a vacancy for the position of leader of the subscription series – a gap filled by another musician of the name of Shaw, but of no relation to Joseph. Early advertisements refer to the new violinist as 'Mr. Shaw jnr' and his origin as 'of Bath'.<sup>35</sup> Thomas Shaw jnr. had played at the Old Assembly Rooms in

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<sup>29</sup> *YC* 22 March 1774.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 February 1775.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 March 1775. Coyle may have survived until 1791 when a man of that name petitioned the RSM. I am indebted to Dr. D. Griffiths for this information.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 February 1774. The *York Courant* remarked that 'he was esteemed the best Performer on the Bass Viol in the North of England' [*YC* 22 May 1775].

<sup>33</sup> *NC* 23 May 1775.

<sup>34</sup> *YC* 1 August 1775.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 October 1776.

Bath and had assisted William Herschel to organise a subscription series there in 1772-3.<sup>36</sup> He was also contracted to the theatre in Bath.<sup>37</sup> When Shaw performed at a concert in Manchester in September 1776,<sup>38</sup> he was also described as 'from Vauxhall'; this was echoed by the *Newcastle Courant* two years later when Shaw played at the first night of Matthias Hawdon's subscription series – the *Courant* referred to Shaw as 'leader at Vauxhall'.<sup>39</sup> Shaw may therefore have divided his time between London and York, although, as York concerts were fortnightly, he must have been in the city for a considerable proportion of his time. He also participated in musical events – charity sermons and theatrical performances – outside the subscription series. It is possible that he was the 'Performer of Note' that the Triennial Subscription had been set up to attract.

Shaw played his first subscription concert in York in November 1775 with Mrs. Hudson as the series' vocal soloist. Triennial tickets were still available as were traditional annual subscriptions.<sup>40</sup> Frances Hudson unusually held her benefit in December and the New Year pattern of benefits was disrupted entirely, consisting only of two benefits for the Musick Assembly in January and February.<sup>41</sup> For the first time in many years, an Assize Week concert was held in the city; this may have been for the benefit of yet another organisation – the 'Musical Fund'.<sup>42</sup> This body is never defined but it may have been a fund for the support of the subscription series; from 1777, the Musick Assembly benefits in March also became benefits for the Musical Fund.<sup>43</sup> The Race Week concerts went ahead as usual with Giardini as leader,<sup>44</sup> and just before the start of the 1776-7 winter series, Shaw went off to Manchester with the Hudsons to play

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<sup>36</sup> Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts*, p. 110.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>38</sup> Brian Crosby, 'Stephen and Other Paxtons', p. 61.

<sup>39</sup> *NC* 7 November 1778.

<sup>40</sup> *YC* 17 October 1775.

<sup>41</sup> *YCh* 18 December 1775; *YC* 26 December 1775, 13 February 1776.

<sup>42</sup> *YC* 5 March 1776.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 March 1777.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 August 1776.

at the concerts to mark the opening of the new concert room there.<sup>45</sup> The winter series in York began rather later than usual in mid-November, on the same terms as the previous year; as a consequence of the late start only seven of the twenty-one concerts were held before Christmas, which meant that the series ran on into May.

During this series, Shaw and Frances Hudson became embroiled in a controversy which highlights some of the difficulties associated with the organisation of such concerts. Robert Jobson, the organist of Wakefield, had moved to Leeds in 1772 and, on taking up the organist's post there, had also taken over the running of the subscription series in the town.<sup>46</sup> He did not, however, give up the management of concerts in Wakefield but continued to run both series; it does not appear that the two had any performers in common apart from himself. In 1776, Jobson decided that he could not go ahead with the Leeds series on practical grounds. He had been informed that Mrs. Hudson, who was the regular vocal soloist at the series, 'would not be able to sing for a considerable time' (possibly because of illness). Moreover 'four other material performers ... would also be wanting'.<sup>47</sup> Jobson felt that the remaining performers would not be sufficient to sustain a concert and that an unacceptable burden would therefore fall upon himself. In a letter to the *York Courant* (written in the third person), he explained that:

he was persuaded within himself that the band would be unequal to the task of amusing an audience for two or three hours together, without the aid of a singer; that it would be incapable of making up a quartetto, or as much as two violins that could accompany a violin concerto, and lastly that there could not be one person in it that could attempt anything principal, except himself. He had some time before desired to be excused from attending the concerts if Mrs. Hudson or some other singer was not to be there, as the exertion of strength and spirits that must from these circumstances fall to his share, was more than could be expected from any single performer.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *YCh* 13 September 1776. Amongst the other performers was Stephen Paxton, the former chorister of Durham now resident in London.

<sup>46</sup> Hargrave, p. 333.

<sup>47</sup> *YCh* 20 December 1776.

<sup>48</sup> *Idem*.

He therefore recommended that the series should not go ahead, but was immediately faced with accusations that he continued to run the Wakefield series although it was in the same state. He pointed out that, although the band in Wakefield was also small, there were others besides himself who could take principal parts, and that a singer was also employed there 'so that the case does not appear to him at all parallel'.<sup>49</sup>

Jobson wrote that he had frequently made his views known and had been startled to see advertisements for the series in local papers which, he claimed, had been inserted by another performer without his knowledge. Believing that the subscribers were determined to go ahead, and apprehensive that without his participation the 'united and best efforts of the whole orchestra might fail of giving the satisfaction he wished to the subscribers', he reluctantly stated that he was willing to bow to pressure and go ahead. Unfortunately, 'the answer he received was that some of the subscribers had sent to York for Mr. Shaw to supply his place, Mr. [Robert] Haxby to play concertos on the German flute, and also to Mrs. Hudson'.<sup>50</sup>

The advertisement for the new Leeds series made it clear that the concerts would not take place unless eighty subscribers were found;<sup>51</sup> this condition seems to have been met and the series went ahead under the direction of Shaw and Frances Hudson. Shaw received a benefit from the series in March 1777, a month after his benefit from the York series; John Camidge and Robert Haxby travelled to Leeds to play in the concert.<sup>52</sup> But by the end of the year, Jobson was back in control of the series, using his pupil, Miss Harwood, as vocal soloist;<sup>53</sup> neither Shaw or Mrs. Hudson are recorded as performing in Leeds again.

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<sup>49</sup> *YCh* 20 December 1776.

<sup>50</sup> *Idem*. Robert was Thomas Haxby's brother.

<sup>51</sup> Hargrave, p. 335.

<sup>52</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>53</sup> Hargrave, p. 336.

By this time, Shaw and Frances Hudson had more than enough to do in York, having taken on the entire management of the winter series there:

Mr. SHAW and Mrs. HUDSON most respectfully inform the Nobility and Gentry, they have, by the Desire of the Gentlemen Directors, undertaken the Concerts, and beg Leave to assure those Ladies and Gentlemen who favour them with their Subscriptions, that they will do every thing in their Power to merit their Patronage.<sup>54</sup>

The pair took prompt action, cutting the number of concerts from 21 to 16 while preserving the same price of subscription (one guinea).<sup>55</sup> Only seven concerts were fitted in before Christmas; the two organisers followed a habit, established in the early 1760s, of advertising isolated concerts within the series: the last concert before Christmas, the first afterwards, the last subscription concert. The following season (1779-80), however, they began to advertise more frequently – every second or third concert – and by the 1780-1 season, they were advertising every concert in the series, suggesting that they were finding it difficult to attract audiences.<sup>56</sup> For the first time, information on the content of the concerts is published, although full programmes are not available. The advertisement for the seventh concert of the 1779-80 series is typical:

THE SEVENTH CONCERT of this Subscription ... will be on FRIDAY, Dec. 31. First Violin (and a Solo Concerto), Mr. SHAW. The Vocal Part by Mrs. HUDSON.<sup>57</sup>

The benefit concerts, re-established in the early part of the year, retained their reliance on the solo concerto; organ concertos (Camidge), violin concertos (Shaw) and flute concertos (Robert Haxby) appeared in every recorded programme. In 1780 and 1781, during Thomas Wright's brief visits to the city, benefits also included clarinet

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<sup>54</sup> YC 10 November 1778.

<sup>55</sup> Idem.

<sup>56</sup> Confusion was frequently caused by the inability of the newspaper or advertiser to count; in 1779, concerts on 26 November and 3 December were both advertised as the third in the series; successive concerts in early 1780 were advertised as the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of the series.

<sup>57</sup> YC 21 December 1779.

concertos.<sup>58</sup> In March 1780, John Camidge also included in his benefit a pianoforte duet played by his young son Matthew and by George Surr, Camidge's apprentice and later organist of St Paul's, Manchester.<sup>59</sup> This is the first recorded public performance on the piano forte in York, around twenty years after the instrument made its debut in London. Matthew appeared at two further benefits for his father, in 1782 and 1784, and became a regular performer in all the benefits from 1785.<sup>60</sup> With the exception of Handel, all the composers whose works were played in the benefits were still living; Shaw provided a large number of works, composing violin concertos for his own performance, several 'full pieces' and a sinfonia. Other contemporary composers represented, if only by one work, included Filtz, Pasquali, Daveaux, Guglielmi and Dittersdorf. (Appendix 1)

Shaw and Mrs. Hudson also took over the running of the Race Week Concerts from 1778, maintaining the usual pattern of four subscription concerts (on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday) with the Thursday reserved for a benefit for the leader.<sup>61</sup> Even here there were changes however; Shaw led the band in place of Giardini and Mrs. Hudson replaced the Italian singers who had up to this time accompanied Giardini to the city. The move suggests that the two were attempting to reduce expenses, as does the disappearance of the triennial subscription ticket, with its guarantee of income intended to attract notable soloists.

In one respect, Shaw and Mrs Hudson did attempt something new – or at least revived an old habit. Prompted by urgings from music-lovers in the city – 'by Particular Desire of several Subscribers to the YORK CONCERT' – a Lent concert was held on 22 March 1780; this was entitled a 'Concerto Spirituale'.<sup>62</sup> The first act consisted of extracts from *Messiah*, the second of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. The concert was

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<sup>58</sup> e.g. YC 22 February 1780. From 1782, full programmes cease to be advertised for the benefit concerts, except on isolated occasions; no reason is apparent for this change.

<sup>59</sup> Surr later married Camidge's daughter [YC 25 October 1785].

<sup>60</sup> YC 12 March 1782, 9 March 1784, 18 February 1785.

<sup>61</sup> e.g. *ibid.*, 17 August 1779.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 March 1780

apparently successful enough to be repeated the following year in almost exactly the same form, merely adding 'a new ANTHEM composed by Mr. SHAW, with Grand Chorusses'.<sup>63</sup> The singers necessary for such large-scale vocal works are not named and it may be that singers from the Minster Choir were brought in.

Shaw was also active outside York, appearing at a benefit for Mr. Stopford, the organist at Halifax, on 14 October 1778 before travelling to Newcastle for the beginning of the subscription series there.<sup>64</sup> He played in a benefit for Frances Hudson in Wakefield in 1785; Mrs. Hudson may have acted as vocal soloist in the subscription series in the town at that time.<sup>65</sup> Shaw also played violin solos and led the band in a Race Week concert in Doncaster in 1780.<sup>66</sup> In addition, he probably continued to play in London throughout this period; he was rarely in York or the surrounding area between April and October, returning only briefly for Race Week concerts in July or August.

### **III: Continuing difficulties in the subscription series – 1782-85**

In 1782, for the first time since the 1730s, no advertisement appears for Race Week concerts. They may have fallen victim to an underlying social trend; an Assembly Room minute, commenting on the decision to hold dancing assemblies in the smaller room rather than the larger, remarked that 'the company resorting to York races has of late been so very small'.<sup>67</sup> But there may have been a more general decrease in audiences for musical events; the winter series that year was again reduced in size from sixteen concerts to fourteen for the one guinea subscription, and the small assembly room rented for the performances, suggesting that the number of subscribers was not

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<sup>63</sup> YC 27 March 1781.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 13 October 1778.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 3 November 1785. The Wakefield series was probably no longer under the management of Robert Jobson.

<sup>66</sup> YC 12 September 1780.

<sup>67</sup> YRO M23.2: ARM 9 July 1782.



large. (The larger room was still used for benefits.) The series began very late, in the first week of December, allowing only four concerts to be held before Christmas; every concert was advertised individually.

Two concerts in late August 1783 may have been Race Week concerts – a subscription to both cost 7s. 6d. Shaw and Frances Hudson provided the principal roles and there is no record of performers being hired for these concerts from outside the city.<sup>68</sup> The format of the winter subscription series was altered slightly from 1788 to allow the last of the series to fall in late May or early June, in the week of the new York Spring Meeting, to take advantage of the presence of additional visitors to the city at that time.<sup>69</sup> This remained the custom for the rest of the century.

In March 1785, yet another attempt was made to revive the practice of holding concerts in Lent. This may have been prompted by the success of a series of oratorios in Leeds in the previous November, which in turn had been a deliberate attempt to copy the London Handel Commemoration five months earlier. Advertisements for the Leeds festival had explicitly stated the connection, offering ‘the same Selection of SACRED MUSIC from HANDEL, which was performed in *Westminster Abbey* on the last Day of the Commemoration, by Command of his Majesty’.<sup>70</sup> The performers were chiefly local men with a substantial sprinkling of London names; Robert Jobson played the organ, his pupil Miss Harwood and Edward Meredith took vocal roles and Cramer, Cervetto and Ashley were named amongst the instrumentalists.<sup>71</sup>

The practice of holding oratorio performances in the area had never completely died out following their popularity around 1770, but there had been a sharp decrease in

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<sup>68</sup> YC 26 August 1783.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 2 December 1788.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 3 December 1784.

<sup>71</sup> No Christian names are listed in the advertisements; it is therefore not possible to say which member of the Ashley family attended these oratorios.

their frequency; most of the performances since 1775 had been in Newcastle where Matthias Hawdon's arrival brought the practice for the first time. But the Handel Commemoration gave a fresh impetus to the practice and over the next nine years a total of 27 separate performances or festivals were advertised in the York and Newcastle newspapers. (Table 11.1)

**Table 11.1: Numbers of oratorio performances/festivals advertised in York and Newcastle newspapers; 1775-1799**

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1775	0	1788	1
1776	0	1789	3
1777	1	1790	4
1778	1	1791	5
1779	0	1792	3
1780	1	1793	2
1781	3	1794	0
1782	1	1795	1
1783	0	1796	0
1784	1	1797	1
1785	4	1798	2
1786	1	1799	0
1787	3		

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Four of these, in Hull (1789 and 1792) and in York and Newcastle in 1791, were organised by John Ashley of London and involved almost exclusively London performers.<sup>72</sup> All the rest were organised by local players and promoters as in the early 1770s, although a small percentage brought in a sprinkling of London players or singers as an added attraction. (Table 11.2)

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<sup>72</sup> See Chapters 13 and 14.

**Table 11.2: Involvement of local/national musicians in oratorio performances 1775-1799**

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Total number of performances	38
Local musicians only	20
London musicians only	4
Principally local with some London performers	10
Unknown	4

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The York Lent oratorios of March 1785 were held to celebrate the opening of the new organ in the church of St. Michael le Belfrey and considerable efforts had been made to recruit a large band and chorus. Meredith and Evance both came down from Durham and chorus singers were brought in from Hey Chapel. All the other performers were local; Shaw led the band, Camidge played the organ and the female singers were Mrs. Hudson and Mrs Shepley, a singer from Leeds ‘who has acquired considerable reputation by her musical abilities’.<sup>73</sup> *Judas Maccabaeus* on 22 March was followed by *Messiah* on 23 March but audiences were not as large as had been hoped. The local papers referred to a ‘polite audience’ for *Judas Maccabaeus* and commented that on the second day ‘the Audience was much more numerous’.<sup>74</sup> ‘Great Praise’ was given to both performances but no further attempt was made to hold such festivals in the city until 1791 when John Ashley visited York with his touring company.<sup>75</sup> Evance and Meredith returned to St. Michael’s a fortnight later to sing at the annual charity sermon (for the benefit of the Lunatic Asylum);<sup>76</sup> it was common practice for the leader and vocal soloists at the subscription series to sing anthems at this event, usually free of charge.<sup>77</sup> On this occasion the musical contribution seems to have been particularly lavish, perhaps to show off the new organ:

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<sup>73</sup> Hargrave, p. 342.

<sup>74</sup> YC 29 March 1785.

<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 13.

<sup>76</sup> In the meantime, Meredith sang in a concert in Sunderland on 5 April [NC 5 March 1785].

<sup>77</sup> e.g. YC 25 March 1783.

**BENEFIT of the MUSICAL FUND:**

In the GREAT ASSEMBLY-ROOM,  
On WEDNESDAY, March 9, and on FRIDAY, March 11,  
Will on each Evening be

**A GRAND CONCERT  
OF VOCAL and INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.**

First Violin and Solo Concerto, Mr. SHAW.

Organ Concerto, Mr. CAMIDGE.

Flute Concerto, Mr. R. HAXBY.

And the Vocal Part, Mrs. HUDSON.

PARTICULARS will be inserted in the Bills.

*To begin at Half past Six o'Clock.*

TICKETS, 5s. each, (which will admit the Bearer to a  
Concert and Ball on the Friday following) to be had at  
Mr. Beverley's in Little Blake-street, and at Mr. Haxby's  
Music-Shop in Blake-street.

*Particular Care will be taken to have the Rooms warm.*

**For the BENEFIT of Mr. CAMIDGE.**

In the GREAT ASSEMBLY-ROOM, Blake-street, York,

On FRIDAY, March 18, 1785,

Will be performed

**A CONCERT**

Of VOCAL and INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.

First Violin and Solo Concerto, Mr. SHAW.

Concerto German Flute, by a GENTLEMAN.

Duet Grand Piano Forte by a YOUNG LADY and  
Mr. CAMIDGE, Jun.

New Concerto Organ, Mr. CAMIDGE.

The Vocal Part, Mrs. HUDSON.

*To begin at Half past Six o'Clock.*

**After the CONCERT a BALL.**

TICKETS, at 2s. 6d. each, to be had at Mr. Haxby's Mu-  
sic-Shop in Blake-street, Mr. Beverley's in Little Blake-  
street, and at Mr. Camidge's in Petergate.

*Particular Care will be taken to have the Room well aired.*

**ORATORIOS.**

At the Opening of the ORGAN in the Church of  
St. MICHAEL-LE-BELFREY, in YORK,

On TUESDAY the 22d of March inst. will be performed  
the ORATORIO of

**JUDAS MACCHABÆUS,**

And on WEDNESDAY the 23d, the sacred ORATORIO of

**MESSEIAH,**

By a select BAND, collected in YORK, DURHAM, H&Y  
CHAPEL, and other Places.

First Violin, Mr. SHAW.

The PRINCIPAL VOCAL PARTS by

Mrs. HUDSON; Mrs. SHEPBEY; Mr. EVANCE,  
and Mr. MEREDITH.

ORGAN, Mr. CAMIDGE.

The Church will be opened at ELEVEN, and each Day's  
Performance begin exactly at TWELVE o'Clock.

A GALLERY will be erected at the East End of the Church.

TICKETS to be had at Mr. HAXBY's Music Shop.  
GALLERY, for each Day, 5s.—MIDDLE ISLE, 4s.—SOUTH  
and NORTH ISLES, 3s.

Books of the ORATORIOS Threepence each.

It is humbly requested of the Ladies and Gentlemen  
who intend to honour the Performance with their Presence,  
to send for Tickets, as no Money can be taken at the  
Church.

During the Service will be performed a NEW OCCASIONAL ANTHEM, composed by Mr. SHAW, together with other Pieces of Sacred Music, accompanied by a Full Band of Instrumental Performers. The principal Vocal Parts by Mrs. HUDSON, Mr. EVANCE and Mr. MEREDITH; with Chorusses by the CHORISTERS of the Cathedral and others.<sup>78</sup>

Meredith was just establishing a reputation in the area, having sung at the Leeds oratorios in November 1784; he returned as soloist in the subscription series there for the 1785-6 season.<sup>79</sup> Evance too was travelling more extensively; he sang in oratorios at Doncaster in 1787,<sup>80</sup> was the regular vocal soloist in a subscription series in Ripon in 1789<sup>81</sup> and returned to York for a sacred concert in 1791.<sup>82</sup> His activities in this respect may have been more extensive than they appear; like Meredith, he frequently asked for leaves of absence from his duties at the Cathedral.<sup>83</sup>

But by this time, Thomas Shaw had long since left the area. In December 1785, the advertisement for the subscription series made it clear that he would not be returning to lead the band – his ‘Engagements in London having induced him to decline attending the CONCERT at York’.<sup>84</sup> The management of the concerts was now to be shared by Frances Hudson and her husband William who:

present their most grateful Acknowledgements to the Ladies and Gentlemen, and Public in general, for the Favour already conferred upon them, and humbly hope for a Continuance of their Patronage and Support.<sup>85</sup>

Their optimism was, it transpired, misplaced.

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<sup>78</sup> YC 5 April 1785.

<sup>79</sup> Hargrave, p. 342.

<sup>80</sup> YC 11 September 1787.

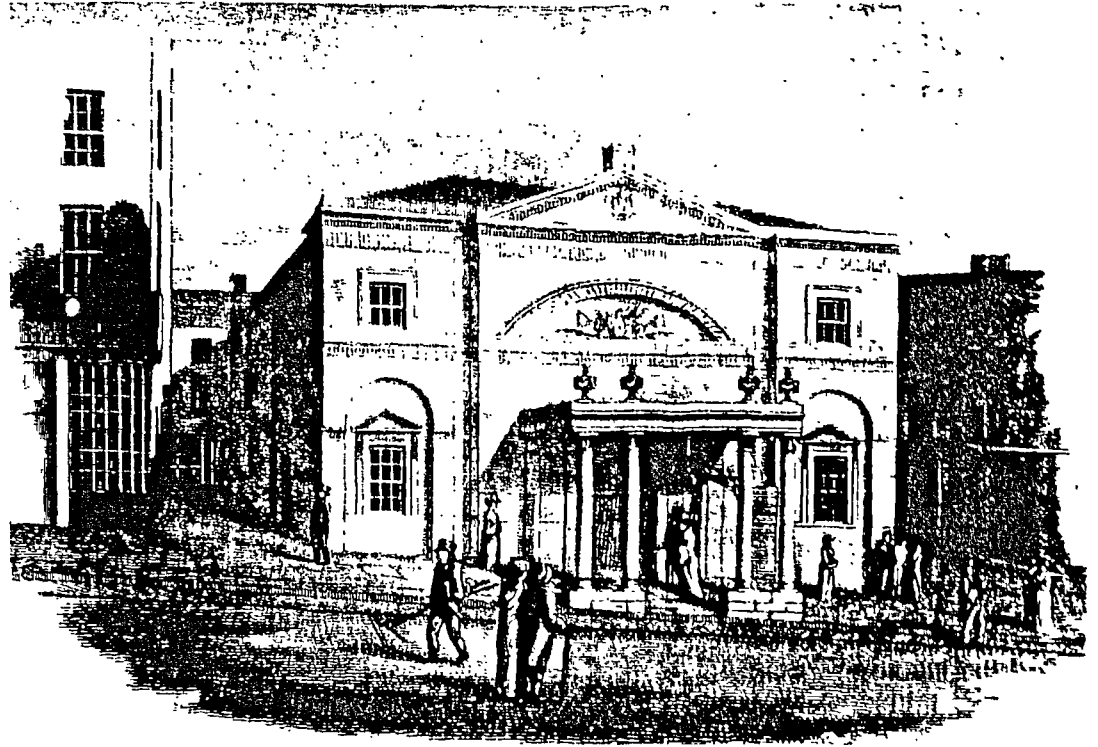
<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 24 November 1789.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 29 March 1791.

<sup>83</sup> CA DAB passim.

<sup>84</sup> YC 6 December 1785. In 1792 Shaw died suddenly at Margate, described by the *York Courant* as ‘a Man of respectable Musical Abilities and private Worth’. He was at the time leader of the Covent Garden band [YC 10 September 1792].

<sup>85</sup> YC 6 December 1785.



THE THEATRE ROYAL IN MOSLEY STREET  
*From Mackenzie's "History of Newcastle" 1827*

Plate 22: The Theatre Royal, Newcastle.

# 12

## **THEATRE MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

### **I: The companies and their repertoire**

Some of the most mobile of North-Eastern musicians belonged to theatre companies. By the 1780s, at least three companies operated within the region (based at Newcastle, North Shields and York respectively); these worked on a circuit basis, that is, they toured a number of towns on a yearly basis, performing for a limited but regular season at each. Some of these circuits could be extremely long; the company of Austin and Whitlock, based in Newcastle at the beginning of the 1780s, travelled over 1000 miles every year, playing in Edinburgh, Newcastle, Lancaster, Chester, Warrington and

Preston.<sup>1</sup> In some years this circuit was made even longer by the addition of a short winter season at Whitehaven in Cumberland.<sup>2</sup> A company based at North Shields in the mid-1760s, under the management of Thomas Bates, toured Newcastle, Stockton, Durham, Sunderland, Scarborough and North Shields.<sup>3</sup> This latter company was taken over by John Cawdell who wrote a poignant commentary on the physical hardships this kind of travelling could sometimes entail, in a bitter little poem penned on the occasion of ‘the Company’s voyage from Scarborough ... in consequence of the Company having been wind bound, &c. for near a fortnight’:

exposed i’the open sea  
Tossing and tumbling, sick as sick can be.<sup>4</sup>

On Cawdell’s death in 1799, Stephen Kemble, manager of the Newcastle company (and successor to Austin and Whitlock), yielded to the protestations of his company that their circuit was too long and tiring, and took over the North Shields circuit – disastrously as it turned out, for the financial health of the Company.<sup>5</sup>

The third company, based at York, belonged to Tate Wilkinson who was almost certainly a Newcastle man; he was described at his marriage (in York in 1768) as ‘of the parish of St. Nicholas in New Castle’<sup>6</sup> and his first child, John, was baptised in York after being born in Newcastle.<sup>7</sup> Unusually, Wilkinson had been a musician before turning to theatre management and had appeared in at least one concert in Bath (in 1762) under the name of ‘Signor Wilkinsoni’.<sup>8</sup> From 1767 until around 1772, Wilkinson’s company toured a circuit that consisted of Newcastle, York, Beverley, Leeds and

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<sup>1</sup> Oswald, *Theatres Royal*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> CP 3 February 1778, 6 January 1778.

<sup>3</sup> Robert King, *North Shields Theatres* (Gateshead: Northumberland Press, 1948), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> J. Cawdell, *The Miscellaneous Poems of J. Cawdell, Comedian ...* (Sunderland: for the author, 1785), pp. 69-73.

<sup>5</sup> For details of this latter company, see Robinson, ‘Stephen Kemble’s Management’, pp. 140-1.

<sup>6</sup> Marriage registers of St Martin’s, Coney Street, York, 11 October 1768.

<sup>7</sup> Baptismal records of St. Michael le Belfrey, York, 7 February 1770.

<sup>8</sup> Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts*, p. 107.



Halifax; in the 1780s, Newcastle was dropped from the circuit and Wilkinson added Sheffield, Doncaster, Pontefract and Wakefield.

The theatres in which these companies played were of variable quality. Wilkinson's company enjoyed a stylish theatre in York while in Newcastle the so-called 'Theatre in the Bigg Market', which was the venue for performances until 1788, was in fact the Long Room of the Turk's Head – also the venue for concerts. The latter half of the century saw an increase in the number of theatres built in the area, including theatres in South Shields and Durham in 1792<sup>9</sup> and Newcastle's new theatre on Moseley Street, whose elegant porch was supported by four pillars above which rose a classical-style pediment.<sup>10</sup>

Programmes for an evening's entertainment at these theatres encompassed a wide range of different genres. Straight plays – comedies, tragedies and farces – were the most frequent fare. A typical programme might include two contrasting major items and some smaller pieces – an ode or recitation – sandwiched between the two; on 19 June 1793, for instance, the Newcastle company presented a comedy – *The Conscious Lovers* – followed by a farce called *Half an Hour after Supper*, with a performance of the well-known and much admired *Ode on the Passions* by Collins, between the two plays.<sup>11</sup> One of the plays was frequently replaced by a large-scale musical item, often merely labelled 'a musical entertainment'. Some of these 'entertainments' were ballad operas, such as that performed in York on 17 February 1784.

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<sup>9</sup> NC 6 October 1792; NA 2 June 1792.

<sup>10</sup> See Oswald, *Theatres Royal* for an account of the building of this theatre.

<sup>11</sup> CL Playbill (Newcastle), 29 June 1793.

By PARTICULAR DESIRE.  
 For the Benefit of Mr. and Mrs. POWELL.  
 At the THEATRE-ROYAL, MINT-YARD, YORK,  
 On SATURDAY Evening next. Feb. 21,  
 Will be reviv'd a COMEDY, call'd  
 The WAY of the WORLD.  
*(As performing at Drury-Lane with universal Applause.) ...*  
 To which will be added a celebrated Comic Opera, call'd  
 ROSINA;  
 Or, LOVE in a COTTAGE.  
 With a New OVERTURE and MUSIC by Mr. SHIELDS. ...  
 After the Farce the favourite Musical Interlude of BUXOM JOAN.<sup>12</sup>

Equally popular were pantomimes. These usually followed the traditional pattern of being based around the adventures of Harlequin (an energetic role played by an adult) and were performed otherwise almost entirely by children; they were musical throughout with no dialogue. The genre however could be very flexible. A performance in York in February 1781 ended with:

A speaking PANTOMIME ENTERTAINMENT, call'd  
 HARLEQUIN's INVASION.  
 With an opening SCENE, representing  
 HARLEQUIN's INVASION of the Castle of Shakespeare.  
*Harlequin*, Mr. Chambers; *Snip*, Mr. Bailey; *Miss Dolly Snip*, Mrs.  
 Hitchcock.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to these large-scale works, incidental music was often inserted into straight plays – the introduction of singing witches into *Macbeth* was a popular ploy. Elsewhere, songs were introduced 'in character' to show off an actor's singing talents; in 1785 Thomas Wright produced a song for Charles Munden of the Newcastle company, in the character he had just portrayed in the farce.

... a new Poetical Piece, written for Mr. Munden and never performed here, called OMNIA VINCIT MORS, or, *Lingo's Lamentation for the Loss of his Wig*; with a NEW SONG, the whole written and composed by Mr. Wright.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> YC 17 February 1784.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 6 February 1781.

<sup>14</sup> NC 9 April 1785.

More extensively, music was played in the gaps between major items and between acts of plays, presumably to cover prolonged changes of scenery or dress. Thus in December 1795 in Newcastle, the 'HISTORICAL TRAGEDY OF King Henry IV *With the Humours of Sir John Falstaff*' was played with the following additions:

End of Act 2d, Mr. EDDY, of this Town, will sing a favourite Song  
(written by Dibdin) called *The Soldier's Adieu*.

END OF ACT FOURTH.

A new BRAVURA SONG ... to be sung by Miss BARNETT.

END OF ACT FIFTH

The much-admired Song of *The Lilies of the Valley*,  
By Mr. EDDY.

The favourite Song of 'Twas within a Mile of Edinburgh',  
by Mrs. KEMBLE.

END OF ACT FIRST OF THE FARCE,

The favourite Song of *TIPPY BOB*,  
To be sung in Character by Mr. EDDY.<sup>15</sup>

Many of these inserted items were irrelevant to the action of the play and some could be extravagantly long – clarinet or violin concertos for instance.<sup>16</sup> Folk-songs were particularly popular; songs were often taken out of other, unconnected works simply because they were favourites of the audience; and dancing masters frequently performed jigs or minuets, in part no doubt by way of personal advertisement.<sup>17</sup> In addition, some works were specifically designed for the purpose, sometimes having relevance to external factors. Thus Thomas Wright composed his song 'The Sons of the Forest', first performed at the Newcastle theatre on 29 March 1786 and later part of his Opus 1, in honour of the 'Gentlemen belonging to the Forest Hunt' who had requested the night's performance and who thronged the theatre.<sup>18</sup> The connection assured it more frequent performances than such ephemeral music usually received.

More rarely, a concert was mounted on the stage, or an ode or similar entertainment performed in the form of a concert. This was particularly popular in the

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<sup>15</sup> CL Playbill (Newcastle), 11 December 1795.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 5 April 1786.

<sup>17</sup> NC 19 April 1788.

<sup>18</sup> CL Playbill (Newcastle), 5 April 1786.

On FRIDAY Evening, December 26, 1794, will be presented, a COMEDY, (not acted here  
these Four Years) called

# I'll tell you What!

Major Cyprus, Mr LAMASH.  
Sir George Euston, Mr HOLLAND.  
Anthony Euston, Mr EGAN.  
Colonel Downright, Mr KEMBLE.  
Sir Harry Harmless, Mr BLANCHARD.  
Charles Euston, Mr SIDDONS.  
Mr Euston, Mr WILSON.  
Lady Euston, Mrs NUNNS.  
Lady Harriet Cyprus, Mrs SMITH.  
Bloom, Mrs BLANCHARD.  
Mrs Euston, Mrs KEMBLE.

After the Play will be brought forward,

## Christmas Amusements.

Being got up entirely for the Entertainment of young Ladies and Gentlemen during  
the Holidays.

Consisting of an INTERLUDE taken from

MISS IN HER TEENS,  
TO BE PERFORMED BY CHILDREN ONLY.

Captain Flash, by Master KEMBLE.  
Fribble, by Master BLANCHARD.  
Tag, by Miss CLARK.  
And Miss Biddy, by Miss WALCOT.

AFTER WHICH,

## A CONCERT on the STAGE,

WHICH WILL FORM AN EXACT REPRESENTATION OF THE

Grand Orchestra in Vauxhall Gardens,

Superbly decorated with a great Variety of

VARIEGATED LAMPS.

In the Orchestra will be ranged, both the Vocal and Instrumental Performers.

The CONCERT to open with A GRAND OVERTURE.

SEVERAL FAVOURITE

CATCHES and GLEES

By Messrs WILSON, BARNETT, LAMASH, NUNNS, BLANCHARD, DAVIS, &c.

Interpersed with the following SONGS, &c.

"SWEET BIRD," a favourite Air,—By Miss Barnett.

Accompanied by Mr Wright.

A COMIC SONG,—By Mr Wilson.

Within a Mile of Edinburgh,—By Mrs KEMBLE.

A New and Favourite SONG,—By Mr Barnett.

A SOLO CONCERTO on the Clarionet,—By Mr Wright.

A FAVOURITE SONG,—By Mrs Blanchard.

DUE—"Time has not thin'd my flowing Hair."

Yorkshire area, where the 1770s saw a brief fad for productions of David Garrick's *Ode to Shakespeare*, which was set to music by Arne.

After the PLAY will be perform'd An ODE (*Written by Mr. GARRICK*)  
Upon Dedicating a BUILDING, and erecting a STATUE to SHAKESPEAR, At *Stratford upon Avon*. In the Manner it was Perform'd there. *And since that, at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane.*  
The MUSIC compos'd by Dr. ARNE. ...  
The Stage will be form'd in the Manner of an ORATORIO, where the whole Band of Music will perform.  
To conclude with a Grand Chorus.<sup>19</sup>

The appeal to productions elsewhere, particularly references to productions in London, was a common one; companies continued to bring productions to the North-East hard upon the heels of their first appearance in the capital. It was not always possible, however, to ensure either the quality or the accuracy of these performances, especially in connection with the orchestral accompaniments. On several occasions, the York company's handbills record Tate Wilkinson's attempts to obtain full orchestral parts; in Hull in December 1792 the playbill noted that 'the Manager is favour'd with ALL THE INSTRUMENTAL PARTS for the Orchestra, from the *King's Theatre in the Haymarket*' implying that this was not usually the case.<sup>20</sup> From time to time Wilkinson paid to have accompaniments written by musicians employed by his company and Thomas Wright in Newcastle also provided orchestral parts for the company there.<sup>21</sup>

## II: The performers

Singing parts in these entertainments were generally taken by actors and actresses within the company. Most players, both male and female, were expected to be able to sing well and some were highly trained. Reviews of their performances are generally excessively

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<sup>19</sup> YML Playbill (Hull), 3 October 1770.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 27 December 1792. The work was 'Don Juan, Or, the Libertine Destroy'd'.

complimentary. When Charles Incledon, an actor, sang at a music festival in Newcastle in 1796, the *Newcastle Chronicle* commented:

The fascinating and unequalled powers of that prodigy, Incledon, cannot fail to attract general attention. His powers of harmony are unparalleled, and the compass and melody of his voice truly enchanting.<sup>22</sup>

Elizabeth Kemble's appearance at the Theatre Royal Newcastle in 1791 (making her debut in *Hamlet* and proceeding to play 'the innocent LUCY' in *The Virgin Unmask'd*) was received equally favourably by the *Newcastle Chronicle* but the paper was less well-disposed towards some of the other performers.

Mrs Kemble ... made her first appearance in Ophelia... In the mad scenes she was particularly excellent; her representation of lunacy was a most happy piece of acting, and the style and manner of her singing was so sweetly plaintive and harmonious that the audience ... unanimously shed the sympathetic tear ... the songs were sung with great taste and sweetness, particularly that in which she had not the competition of the fiddlers to encounter.<sup>23</sup>

On rare occasions, theatre companies hired someone principally as a singer; this seems to have occurred only once in the North-East, in the 1770s, when Tate Wilkinson hired a Mr. Raworth. At Raworth's first appearance with the company in February 1770 in York, he was described as being 'from the *Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden*'; he performed Arne's cantata, *Cymon and Iphigenia*.<sup>24</sup> At first Wilkinson employed him merely to sing extra vocal items between the acts of the plays,<sup>25</sup> or for purely vocal parts as in *Midas* where he played Apollo 'being his first Appearance in any Character'.<sup>26</sup> Extra songs were sometimes inserted into these parts to show Raworth to better advantage.<sup>27</sup> It was the end of the year before he appeared in any speaking role, taking a

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<sup>21</sup> CL Playbills (Newcastle), passim.

<sup>22</sup> NCh 23 July 1796.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 22 January 1791.

<sup>24</sup> YML Playbill (York), 6 February 1770.

<sup>25</sup> e.g. ibid., 23 May 1770.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 24 February 1770.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 5 May 1770.

small part in *Macbeth* in Hull,<sup>28</sup> and his appearances in such roles were always extremely limited.

Information about instrumentalists is more limited but clearly the companies used a mixture of in-house musicians employed by the company and local musicians hired for the night. The North Shields theatre company used a Mr. Brown as leader of the band in the 1780s and 1790s; he described himself in advertisements as ‘of London’.<sup>29</sup> Brown was clearly employed by the company and travelled with it, using his brief stays in the towns on the circuit to deal in musical goods.

BROWN, Musician, from LONDON and first Violin at the Theatre, takes this Method of informing the Ladies and Gentlemen of DURHAM and its ENVIRONS, that he has opened his Musical warehouse in NEW ELVET, where he has laid down an Assortment of all kinds of MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, warranted by the first Makers; and a capital Collection of all the Concertos, Overtures, Lessons, single Songs, that are now in the greatest estimation.<sup>30</sup>

Brown stressed that these high-quality instruments were all ‘at the London prices’ – presumably cheaper than other instruments available locally. He operated a system whereby instruments could be taken home ‘on approval’ and exchanged within fifteen months if not suitable, and could provide customers with a catalogue of his stock.<sup>31</sup> His shops were set up in turn in Durham, Darlington, Scarborough, Whitby, North Shields and Sunderland.<sup>32</sup> Brown is known to have taken part in a number of musical activities unconnected with the theatre; his leadership of the Sunderland Musical Society has already been noted<sup>33</sup> and he also directed at least one local concert, a benefit for the South Shields organist in December 1789 at which, according to the *Newcastle*

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<sup>28</sup> YML Playbill (Hull), 5 December 1770.

<sup>29</sup> NA 20 March 1790.

<sup>30</sup> Idem.

<sup>31</sup> Idem.

<sup>32</sup> Idem.

<sup>33</sup> NC 19 March 1791. Brown had just recovered from an injury to his hand which had prevented him playing.

*Courant*, 'a solo, composed by himself, was executed with such delicacy and execution, as fully evinced the hand of a master, and met with unbounded marks of approbation'.<sup>34</sup>

The earliest references to musicians employed by the Newcastle company date from 1777; a theatre advertisement in April of that year refers to a 'Mr. Smith, musician'.<sup>35</sup> Two years later, the *Newcastle Courant* recorded Smith's marriage in Whitehaven, describing him as 'Musician in Messrs. Austin and Whitlock's Company of Comedians'.<sup>36</sup> Smith was almost certainly the leader of the band and, like Brown, occasionally appeared in local concerts – he acted as first violin in a concert in Workington, Cumberland, in April 1781. Smith was clearly employed by the company and travelled with them, but where rank-and-file musicians were concerned, Austin and Whitlock hired locally on a short-term basis, sometimes with undesirable consequences. In Newcastle in February 1778, they faced what was in effect a strike.

On Monday last, the Musicians of this town, who are employed at the Theatre, took the advantage of the Managers putting up an Opera for that Night, and sent them Word, in a very hostile Manner, that if they would not advance their Salaries, they would not attend, which the Managers were compelled to comply with, or must have disappointed the publick of that night's performance.<sup>37</sup>

The Newcastle band was not known for its amenable behaviour. Thomas Bewick, in his *Memoir*, recalled an occasion on which the musicians clashed with Charles Dibdin (possibly at the time of his visit in 1788).<sup>38</sup> Bewick told how 'M<sup>r</sup>. Dibdin, who often called upon me, had some performance to exhibit at our Theatre, & had quarrelled with the Theatrical Band, on acc<sup>t</sup> of their exorbitant demands'.<sup>39</sup> Required to come up with a solution to Dibdin's problems, Bewick recommended him to dispense with the band

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<sup>34</sup> NC 26 December 1789.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 5 April 1777.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 1 May 1779.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 21 February 1778.

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 10.

<sup>39</sup> Bewick, *Memoir*, p. 96.



altogether and to hire instead a piper employed by the Duke of Northumberland – a change which, he claimed, caused ‘both pleasure and surprize in the audience’.<sup>40</sup>

### **III: Tate Wilkinson and the band of the York company**

The survival of a range of documentation about the York theatre company allows a glimpse of the musical organisation of such bodies. From the late 1760s until beyond the turn of the century, this company was run by the Wilkinson family – first Tate Wilkinson and then his son, John. Tate Wilkinson’s accounts survive for most of the years from October 1781 until the end of October 1784, recording income and expenditure on a daily basis.<sup>41</sup> The company at this time began the year in York, moving on to Leeds about the middle of May; three months later, they returned to York for a two-week stay during the Races. At the beginning of September, they moved to Wakefield for three weeks then to Doncaster (two to three weeks), Sheffield (four weeks) and Hull where they remained for the rest of the year and, occasionally, the odd week into the new year (one to two months).

Wilkinson employed between one and four musicians who travelled with the company. The only musician who stayed with Wilkinson throughout this period was his leader, George French; French was associated with the company from at least the 1780s until the early part of the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> In addition, Wilkinson seems to have employed a cellist on a regular basis, although the musicians filling this post tended to stay only a short time.<sup>43</sup> By early 1784, Wilkinson was employing four musicians and continued to do so throughout the year. The salaries for these musicians are irregularly

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<sup>40</sup> Bewick, *Memoir*, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> YCL Y792 Tate Wilkinson, Nett receipts of the Theatre Royal, York and of Leeds, Halifax, Wakefield, Doncaster and Hull.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., *passim*.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., October 1781 (Hull); July 1782 (Leeds); September 1782 (Wakefield); October 1782 (Sheffield).

recorded in Wilkinson's accounts but appear to have been one guinea a week for French and 15s. a week for the other musicians, representing 7s. and 5s. respectively for each of the company's three performances in the week. Extra small sums were frequently paid to these musicians, particularly to French, for a variety of activities; in December 1781, for instance, French received 10s. 10d. 'for writ<sup>8</sup>' (by which Wilkinson meant music-copying)<sup>44</sup> and in March 1783 received another payment 'for letters'.<sup>45</sup> On a number of occasions, French provided extra music for various productions – additional songs for the *Poor Soldier* in August 1784,<sup>46</sup> accompaniments for songs in 1789,<sup>47</sup> and music for a pantomime, also in 1789.<sup>48</sup>

Wilkinson was unusually generous towards his musicians, perhaps as a result of having been one himself, and his company is the only one in the North-East known to have allowed benefit performances for the musicians (although Austin and Whitlock may have given their leader, Smith, a share of the profits of a production in April 1777).<sup>49</sup> French generally had two benefits during the year, one at the end of the year in Hull, and a second – usually in April – in York.<sup>50</sup> A third benefit in Leeds in July was for the benefit of all the musicians, including French and local musicians employed by the company. These benefits usually consisted of a normal theatre production with additional, sometimes extensive, musical items interposed, as in this programme from York in April 1782.

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<sup>44</sup> YCL Wilkinson, Nett receipts, 22 December 1781 (Hull).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 1 March 1783 (York).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 7 August 1784 (Leeds).

<sup>47</sup> YC 7 April 1789.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 31 May 1789.

<sup>49</sup> NC 5 April 1777.

<sup>50</sup> YCL Wilkinson, Nett receipts, passim.

Benefit of Mr. FRENCH, Leader of the BAND.  
 On TUESDAY Evening, April 30,  
 Will be presented a COMEDY, call'd  
 LOVES MAKES a MAN:  
 Or, The FOP's FORTUNE. ...  
 End of Act II. (for that NIGHT only)  
 A CONCERTO on the GERMAN FLUTE, by Mr. *R. Haxby*.  
 End of Act III. (the last Time this Season)  
 The favourite Hunting Song of TALLY-O! Mrs. HESKER.  
 End of the PLAY (for that Night only)  
 A SONATA on the SPANISH GUITAR, by Mr. *R. Haxby*,  
 accompanied by a Violin and Violoncello.  
 To which will be added, a COMIC OPERA, call'd  
 The PADLOCK. ...  
 Sestino's RONDEAU will be introduced in Act II to the quick Time,  
 as sung in the Burletta by Signora Sestini.<sup>51</sup>

Other benefits included French horn concertos, harpsichord concertos, extra overtures and dancing.<sup>52</sup>

Receipts for these benefits were extremely variable. Wilkinson's practice was to give the recipient of the benefit half the profits after expenses had been paid. French's benefit in April 1782 (the programme cited above) brought him £11. 2s. 6d.,<sup>53</sup> but four months earlier in Hull he received only £5. 12s.<sup>54</sup> A statement of receipt for the Theatre Royal, Hull, which survives for the late 1790s, suggests more profitable benefits; at this time, income from benefits held jointly for French and his wife (an actress who generally played very small parts) probably ranged from around £12 to as much as £28.<sup>55</sup> When French shared benefits with other musicians, his income could be much smaller; at a benefit in Leeds in August 1784 shared with two other salaried musicians in

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<sup>51</sup> YC 30 April 1782.

<sup>52</sup> YCL Wilkinson, Nett receipts, 2 May 1782, 6 May 1783, 1 May 1784 (York).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 30 April 1782 (York).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 12 December 1781 (Hull).

<sup>55</sup> Hull Central Library L792. *Statement of the Receipts of the benefit nights of the Performers, &c. At the Theatre-Royal, HULL*. This document gives only total receipts; the figures quoted are therefore estimates.

the company, French's share of the profits was £2 3s. 6d.<sup>56</sup> The other musicians received less.

#### **IV: Rank-and-file musicians**

Wilkinson's accounts indicate that the rank and file of his theatre band were recruited from local musicians resident in the towns in which the company played. The accounts indicate eight or nine musicians were hired locally for the York season and four for the Leeds season. A musician from Pontefract is known from a newspaper report of 1789.<sup>57</sup> In York, the musicians included John Camidge's apprentice, George Surr, and Thomas Haxby's apprentice, Samuel Knapton, as well as waits such as Messrs. Hartley, Watson, Kilvington and Barnard. Although the York band seems to have been competent, the quality of these men could be variable; a handbill for a performance in Beverley in July 1771, states that 'Mr. WILKINSON thought it better to defer a musical Farce the first Night, that the Band may be regularly settled'.<sup>58</sup>

No fixed rate of payment was made for these rank and file musicians. On 27 January 1784, for instance, Wilkinson paid three musicians a total of eight shillings for one performance, suggesting a payment of 2s. 8d. each,<sup>59</sup> but on other evenings the totals do not divide equally – on various occasions Wilkinson paid his York band of eight players £1 11s. 9d.,<sup>60</sup> and £1. 9s. 6d.<sup>61</sup> However, 2s. 6d. or 3s. per night seems to have been a common payment; in February 1784, one player was paid 17s. 6d. for seven

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<sup>56</sup> YCL Wilkinson, Nett Receipts, 18 August 1784 (Leeds).

<sup>57</sup> YC 18 August 1789. Joseph Clough, a violinist in the Pontefract theatre, was drowned with a friend while swimming in the river at Ferrybridge.

<sup>58</sup> YML Playbill, 24 July 1771 (Beverley).

<sup>59</sup> YCL Wilkinson, Nett Receipts, 27 January 1784 (York).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 13 March 1782 (York).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 5 February 1783 (York).

nights playing, that is 2s. 6d. per night,<sup>62</sup> and some of Wilkinson's regular payments – £1 4s.<sup>63</sup> and £1 7s.<sup>64</sup> – suggest eight and nine players respectively at 3s. a night. A drummer or trumpeter, when required, was always paid one shilling per night.<sup>65</sup> In York and Leeds, these payments were augmented by yearly benefits, but as the profits from these benefits were divided between so many musicians, the income could be small – in Leeds in July 1782, seven musicians (including French) divided £9 4s. between them.<sup>66</sup>

## V: Guest players

From time to time, Wilkinson hired more prominent musicians for particular performances. Thomas Haxby's brother, Robert, played flute and guitar solos on a number of occasions including the benefit for George French quoted above; Thomas Hawdon was enlisted to play harpsichord concertos in the Hull theatre in 1786.<sup>67</sup> More established and distinguished musicians also had no objection in principle to performing in the theatre. In May 1776, Wilkinson advertised his gratitude to the Minster Organist, John Camidge, although it is not clear whether Camidge had appeared at the theatre in person or merely lent Wilkinson an instrument:

A Harpsichord being absolutely necessary at the Theatre for some nights past, Mr. CAMIDGE was applied to. He not only gave his Assistance in the most friendly manner, but behaved so generously and genteely on the occasion, that Mr. Wilkinson is reduced to the necessity of thus publicly acknowledging his obligations to him.<sup>68</sup>

Camidge certainly appeared as a player in the theatre in connection with performances of the *Ode to Shakespeare*. This was a particular favourite of Yorkshire audiences and

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<sup>62</sup> YCL Wilkinson, Nett receipts, 7 February 1784 (York).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 23 January 1783 (York).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 13 February 1783 (York).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., e.g. 24 January 1784 (York).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 5 July 1782 (Leeds).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., [?] 1786 (Hull).

<sup>68</sup> YC 27 May 1776.

Wilkinson performed it in all the towns his company visited, with particularly frequent productions in Hull and York. The *Ode* involved at least six singers and a speaking part (often performed by Wilkinson himself) and was accompanied by a band on stage.<sup>69</sup> Wilkinson generally hired prominent local singers and instrumentalists for this *Ode*. On 2 May 1770, for instance, he used three vocal soloists from his own company (including Raworth) and hired Mr. and Mrs. Hudson and Thomas Haxby from York for the remaining parts.<sup>70</sup> In April 1772 and again in January 1775, John Camidge led the band on stage in York performances of the *Ode*.<sup>71</sup> In Hull, Wilkinson regularly employed Mr. Marlow, a local organist, as harpsichordist and Mr. Southerne, a local dancing-master, as first violin.<sup>72</sup> In Leeds in August 1772, Wilkinson's leader for the *Ode* was Robert Jobson.<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps Wilkinson's most ambitious production, however, was another *Ode* – this time to Charity, '*Adapted for the Stage, and set to MUSIC by Mr. JACKSON of Exeter*'. This was put on in 1767 in York for the benefit of the Charity Schools there.<sup>74</sup> (Wilkinson held a yearly benefit for the Schools and put on the same production the following year.)<sup>75</sup> This production included a large number of performers (all appearing free of charge): the company's actors and actresses, the children of the Charity School and 'in order to make the Piece as compleat as possible, the Performers at the *CONCERT*, the *CATHEDRAL*, and the Band of the *HORSE GUARDS BLUE*, will assist'.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> YML Handbill 29 October 1770 (Hull),.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 2 May 1770 (York).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 11 April 1772 (York): YCh 27 January 1775.

<sup>72</sup> Wilkinson described Southerne as 'the leading dancing master' in Hull and remarked that he 'has great merit as a professor, in the art of teaching young ladies and gentlemen to walk, move, sit, and what is more difficult, how to stand still' [Tate Wilkinson, *The Wandering Patentee; or, a History of the Yorkshire Theatres from 1770 to the Present Time: ...* (York: for the author, 1795) Vol. I, pp. 213-4].

<sup>73</sup> YML Playbill (Leeds), 31 August 1772.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 3 January 1767 (York).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 2 January 1768 (York).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 3 January 1767 (York).

Only once is a work by a local composer known to have been played by Wilkinson's company. In April 1777, Wilkinson staged a production of 'A DRAMATIC PIECE, in Five Acts, call'd CHARACTERUS Written on the model of the antient Greek Tragedy, by W. MASON, M.A.'. <sup>77</sup> The music for this entertainment was a pot-pourri of pieces taken from other composers' works; the advertisement stated that 'The Airs, Chorusses, &c. partly selected from the most celebrated *Composers*, and partly (with an *Overture*) new set by Mr. SHAW'. <sup>78</sup> Shaw had only recently arrived in the city and this early contribution to the theatre may have been the forerunner of further works; however no further advertisements survive to suggest that this was actually the case. Shaw led the orchestra on this occasion, Thomas Thackray was principal cellist and John Camidge played harpsichord. Amongst the singers was 'the Young Gentleman who sings at Mr. Camidge's concert' – probably a chorister. <sup>79</sup>

## VI: Participation of theatre personnel in commercial concerts

Personnel from the theatre companies sometimes took part in concert activity in the various towns in which the companies stayed. The contributions of Smith and Brown to concerts in Cumberland and the North-East have already been noted; George French is known to have taken part in a number of concerts in Yorkshire. On two occasions he held benefits for himself, at Barton near Hull and at Selby, using actresses as vocal soloists on both occasions; <sup>80</sup> it is not clear why French held these concerts outside the major centres of Hull and York where he and the actresses were familiar figures. In 1791, he led the orchestra in a number of performances at the Hull Musical Festival; <sup>81</sup> it

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<sup>77</sup> *YCh* 8 April 1777.

<sup>78</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>80</sup> *YC* 7 December 1784, 10 April 1787.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 April 1791. Thomas Wright of Newcastle played the organ at this event.

is likely that all three men – Smith, French and Brown – participated more extensively in local concert-giving in the area than is at present known.

Singers from the companies played a very considerable part in local music-making. Many actresses held benefits within the area covered by the theatre company to which they belonged or were offered benefits by local bodies. In 1751, a number of ladies and gentlemen in North Shields held a benefit for a Mrs. St. Clair from the Newcastle Company; Mrs. St. Clair was said to have ‘had the Honour to perform before most of the Quality and Gentry in Great Britain with Applause’.<sup>82</sup> In the late 1750s and early 1760s, Mrs. Stamper, ‘late Signora Mazzanti’<sup>83</sup> (again from the Newcastle company), engaged on a mini-tour of the region, giving concerts in Newcastle, Sunderland, and Durham in company with ‘Performers from Edinburgh, Newcastle, &c.’ and performing works by ‘the best Italian Masters; viz. Perez, Jomelly, Pergolesi, Sassone, &c.’.<sup>84</sup> (At the Durham concert Mrs. Stamper added Handel to her list of composers.)<sup>85</sup>

The prominence of Mrs. Taylor in Newcastle immediately after the death of Charles Avison was matched a little later by that of another actress, Mrs Bogle. Her first recorded appearance as a concert singer was in 1771 in a performance at South Shields of the ubiquitous *Ode to Shakespeare*, at that time a new piece and as well liked by the Newcastle company as by Tate Wilkinson.<sup>86</sup> But the bulk of Mrs. Bogle’s concert appearances in the area were in Newcastle, particularly in association with Charles Avison jnr., at whose benefits she sang in the early 1770s; in 1773, the benefit was held jointly for Avison and Mrs. Bogle.<sup>87</sup> She also sang at some of Edward Avison’s mid-

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<sup>82</sup> NG 20 March 1751.

<sup>83</sup> NC 11 October 1760.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 3 November 1759, 11 October 1760, 25 October 1760, 25 October 1760.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 25 October 1760.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 6 July 1771.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 10 April 1773.



year concerts.<sup>88</sup> In the 1780s, Mrs. Bogle was with the theatre company in Whitehaven, where for financial reasons she found herself stranded; she set herself up as a teacher of guitar and singing, catering for young ladies only at five shillings a month.<sup>89</sup> She held at least one benefit concert in the town, presenting a programme consisting almost entirely of extracts from *Le Devin du Village*, a 'Musical Entertainment of the celebrated J.J. ROUSEAU'. The company's leader, Mr. Smith, played a violin solo.<sup>90</sup> A postscript to the advertisement attempted blatantly to enlist the sympathy of readers:

From the kind Promises she [Mrs. Bogle] has received, of being properly supported and encouraged, on this Occasion, she humbly hopes to be enabled to extricate herself from some present Difficulties, and to obtain the Means of being once more conveyed to her Family; from which (by inevitable Misfortune) she has been so long separated.<sup>91</sup>

She was not the only actress to find herself in financial difficulties. In 1788 William Hudson in York was forced by the illness of his wife to hire an actress as vocal soloist in subscription concerts;<sup>92</sup> he employed Maria Iliff from Wilkinson's company and she appeared in most of the concerts in the second half of the series and was granted a benefit in February 1789. However, she was new to the company and seems to have had some intimation of disaster from the beginning, describing herself in advertisements for the benefit as 'being sensible of the Disadvantage she labours under by being an entire Stranger in York'.<sup>93</sup> The concert was a disaster and she was left trying to 'retrieve the Loss of Friday Night in the Assembly-Rooms [Which] from the Multiplicity of Diversions in the Week, Mrs Iliff having Vanity enough to suppose would be fully attended'.<sup>94</sup> Tate Wilkinson, sensitive to the financial struggles of members of his company, hurriedly arranged an extra benefit night for Iliff at the theatre, giving up half

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<sup>88</sup> NC 19 June 1773, NJ 24 February 1776.

<sup>89</sup> CP 20 November 1781.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 27 April 1783.

<sup>91</sup> Idem.

<sup>92</sup> See Chapter 13.

<sup>93</sup> YC 10 February 1789.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 17 February 1789.

his own profits for the night;<sup>95</sup> the actress sang at one more concert in the city (Camidge's benefit the following week) but never returned.

Actors appeared much more infrequently at concerts in the region; in Newcastle and Durham this was perhaps owing to the presence of so many excellent male singers at Durham Cathedral. This factor cannot have been as significant in York where singers from the Minster were rarely used after Haxby and Nares's duets in the 1750s. Male singers appeared only occasionally in the city before the 1790s; William Hudson occasionally sang at the charity sermons at St. Michael le Belfrey<sup>96</sup> and singers for oratorio performances tended to be more prominent and regular singers in the genre such as Meredith. Newcastle provides the few examples of actors singing in concerts. Incledon's contribution to the 1796 musical festival has already been mentioned; in addition Mr. Blanchard, an actor from the Newcastle company, sang at the Spring Gardens in the city in 1766,<sup>97</sup> and several actors, including the local favourite, Mr. Jeffreys, appeared in Charles Avison's concerts in the 1770s in company with Mrs. Bogle.<sup>98</sup> Generally speaking, however, male actors did not establish any great presence in local concert-giving.

## VII: Too much success

Maria Iliff of the York Company knew the problems of lack of success; another actress, Miss Reynolds, knew the penalties of too great popularity. In his memoirs – *The Wandering Patentee* – Wilkinson told the story of a night at the York Theatre Royal when what looked to be an extraordinary musical success turned into disaster. In May 1791, Wilkinson gave the doorkeeper at the theatre a benefit, a night, Wilkinson

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<sup>95</sup> *YC* 17 February 1789.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 April 1781.

<sup>97</sup> *NCh* 10 May 1766.

<sup>98</sup> *NC* 13 April 1771, 10 April 1773; *NCh* 16 April 1774.

remarked, when 'tickets are as plenty, and as cheap as herrings are ... in Yarmouth on a plentiful Season'.<sup>99</sup> As a result, the galleries were crowded, evidently not a common sight in York. The play was *Venice Preserv'd* and was followed by a musical farce *No Song, no Supper*. The people in the gallery were rowdy and during the farce it became clear that they had been drinking steadily all evening, although they were good-humoured and appreciative, particularly of a young actress, Miss Reynolds. In the last act, Miss Reynolds sang a popular song in which she magically charmed up a cake and a leg of lamb (thus providing supper) and also produced a lawyer out of a sack. The audience clamoured for an encore. As a repetition of the song would have meant hiding the food again and the actor playing the lawyer climbing back into the sack, the whole company felt what Wilkinson described as 'the glaring absurdity' of this and carried on. The audience protested vociferously.<sup>100</sup>

Fearful of riot, the actors dashed through the remaining dialogue and Wilkinson, growing worried, brought down the curtain and told the actors and band to go home. The move was counterproductive:

I ordered the curtain quickly down, thinking that by such a procedure, and the audience containing a great number of rabble, that as they were certainly inclined for tumult, that would be the best way to put an end to it, however, instead of that course it only incensed to a degree, perhaps never instanced in any theatre. ... The gentlemen in the boxes, to make bad worse, and inflame the minds of the million to a greater pity of fury, urged them on to outrage, to insist on the band being sent for (for they had left the orchestra and were gone home) and Miss Reynolds ordered to sing the song again.<sup>101</sup>

Wilkinson pleaded with the audience to calm down, pointing out the absurdity of re-staging the scene, but he was forced to concede that Miss Reynolds would sing the song again. In view of the absence of the band, he proposed that she would sing unaccompanied. The audience refused to accept this compromise:

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<sup>99</sup> Tate Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, p. 220.

<sup>100</sup> Idem.

They insisted on the band's being sent for, and I was saluted with a variety of candlesticks, branches and flaming candles thrown at my head, with many voices crying, 'Knock the insolent fellow down!' and they were then very angry that the band was not there, though a little thought must inform every mind, conversant with theatrical matters or not, that it is very natural, when the band or the actors have finished their business at the theatre, that they will go home, to a tavern, or to an acquaintance, or as fancy likes the best. If an actor or musician lives at a distant part of York it must take up a considerable time to go and return, besides the hazard and likelihood of not finding him or her at home. ... They were so enraged at the musicians not being that instant in the orchestra ... that they continued not only breaking the seats, and greatly injuring my property but the *gentlemen* from the boxes made use of the grossest epithets ... and one sprig of valour was so bold, daring and full of diabolical spirit, that he repeatedly took a lighted candle to set the frontispiece on fire.<sup>102</sup>

Fortunately for Wilkinson, members of his company had by this time found at least some of the musicians, including George French, and a tolerable band was assembled to encore the song:

Miss Reynolds sang her ... song amidst loads of grease, broken brass arms, &c. when from the boxes they insisted on Mr. French, the leader, asking pardon, first of them, and next of the whole house, for quitting the theatre; which humiliation he went through to the infinite satisfaction of those who were ... so humane and sensible as to think whoever appertains to a theatre may be treated at any time with the utmost indignity. ... Next after Mr. French, all the performers concerned in the finale, were condemned to ask pardon.<sup>103</sup>

One of the actors unluckily made matters worse by blaming Wilkinson for the trouble and he was 'again universally called on to appear and in the most abject terms, like the unfortunate Louis of France to be condemned'. He remarked that 'the pill was very bitter to swallow and hard of digestion and I felt myself most contemptibly, as well as undeservedly treated'.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Tate Wilkinson, *Wandering Patentee*, p. 220.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., pp. 221-2.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

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J. DONALDSON,  
ORGAN-BUILDER, YORK,

RESPECTFULLY informs his Friends that he has removed to those premises lately occupied by Mr. MARSHALL, in Petergate, where he carries on, as formerly, his manufactory of Church, Chamber, Barrel, and Bird Organs, which will be executed in the neatest and most approved manner, and on such terms as he hopes will secure to him the countenance and support of the public.

J. DONALDSON has also added to his Organ business, that of Piano Forte MAKING and REPAIRING, as well as DEALING in Piano Fortes by BROADWOOD, CULLIFORN, and the other best makers in London, which he sells at their prices, and warrants their standing in tune. A great variety of these Instruments may be seen at his shop in Petergate.

To be LETT,

The House, Warchouses, Garden, and Hot-house, all in good condition, where J. Donaldson lately lived, without Micklegate Bar: they are very desirably situated, and well calculated for a large manufactory. Inquire of J. Donaldson, who will treat for the same.

# 13

## A SLOW DECLINE: YORK CONCERT LIFE 1785-1800

### I: The Hudsons take over

Thomas Shaw's departure from York in 1785 had thrown the continuance of the subscription concerts into such doubt that the Directors of the Assembly Room commented that they were willing to hire out the small room 'provided there be any Concerts this Winter'.<sup>1</sup> The Hudsons were apparently more optimistic; William (who had long since given up his French horn playing) was probably the more active partner, particularly after his wife's health began to deteriorate in 1788. The couple brought in as leader of the band, Charles Wilton who had been a pupil of Giardini.<sup>2</sup> The subscription series went ahead on the same terms as the previous year starting in mid-

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<sup>1</sup> YRO M23:2 ARM, 20 October 1785.

<sup>2</sup> Marsh, *Journals*, p. 198. In view of Giardini's long association with York, Wilton may have been a personal recommendation, although Giardini was no longer resident in England at this point.

December 1785, with Wilton's benefit replacing that of Shaw in late spring.<sup>3</sup> Wilton also took on Shaw's other engagements in the city, composing an anthem for the charity sermon at St. Michael le Belfrey in April and playing first violin at the same event, but his stay in York was short-lived. His last known appearance was at a benefit for the Musical Fund in March 1787 and he was no longer in the city by the time the winter subscription series of that year began.<sup>4</sup> No new leader was named but it is probable that William Hudson himself took over that role – he was certainly leader of the band three years later.<sup>5</sup>

Several changes were introduced in the 1787-8 series. The number of concerts was reduced from fourteen to thirteen and complex ticket regulations were introduced – a particular obsession with the transferability of tickets suggests that a certain amount of abuse had been taking place. Special ladies tickets were introduced at three-quarters of the cost of a full ticket.<sup>6</sup> (These proved unpopular and were dropped two years later.)<sup>7</sup>

Further changes were in store. The evidence of newspaper advertisements suggests that Frances Hudson had not been well for much of 1787. In February, she had shared the vocal part in her own benefit with Edward Meredith;<sup>8</sup> Meredith stayed a further week for the next subscription concert<sup>9</sup> and returned for three benefits in March.<sup>10</sup> In the spring of the following year (1788), Mrs. Hudson shared vocal parts with an actress from the theatre company, Miss Hitchcock,<sup>11</sup> and by November of that year it was clear that she could only play a restricted part in the new series – she was advertised as taking part in some of the later concerts and benefits. Her husband was

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<sup>3</sup> YC 21 February 1786.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 13 March 1787. It is likely that he moved to Liverpool where in May 1795, at the time of his marriage, he was described as 'leader of the band at the Music Hall' [YC 20 December 1791].

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 20 December 1791.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 27 November 1787.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1 December 1789.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 23 January 1787.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6 February 1787.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 13 March 1787.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 5 February, 11 March 1788.

forced to hire Maria Iliff, from Tate Wilkinson's company. It was an awkward arrangement; during the first half of the series, Wilkinson's company was making its customary stay in Hull and the usual night of the concert had to be changed from Friday to Thursday. (The theatre company's nights of performance were Monday, Wednesday and Friday.) Once the company moved to York in the New Year, the subscription concerts returned to Friday nights. This far from satisfactory arrangement suggests some difficulty on Hudson's part in finding a soloist and the lack of enthusiasm for Iliff's benefit at the end of the series indicates he had not been particularly successful.<sup>12</sup> More popular was another visitor to the city at this time, the 'celebrated POLISH LILLIPUTIAN', Count Boruwlaski, who lodged in the city for two or three weeks. The Count was 'in the 49th Year of his Age, exceeds not in Size a Child three or four Years old; speaks several languages, plays on various Musical Instruments, and is no less astonishing for the wonderful Regularity of his Proportion, than for his Mental Faculties, and the Liveliness of his Conversation'.<sup>13</sup> He held a ball at the Assembly Rooms where he played several pieces on the guitar, and was also available to talk to visitors to his lodgings.<sup>14</sup>

William Hudson plainly considered that a demand for concerts still existed in the city and he may have been encouraged by a number of subscribers to the winter series who urged him to put on a mini-subscription of two extra concerts in late April 1789. Tickets cost 5s. for the two concerts.<sup>15</sup> Hudson then decided to revive the lapsed Race Week concerts in August. Four morning concerts were held (the fifth morning may have been reserved for a benefit) and Hudson hired performers from London 'at a great Expence': the Italian violinist Ignazio Raimondi (who had arrived in England eight years before) and the singer Madame Marie Pieltain, wife of the violinist Dieudonné-Pascal

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 12.

<sup>13</sup> *YC* 27 January 1789.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 February 1789.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 April 1789.



Pieltain. (Frances Hudson was also advertised as vocal soloist.) Principal cellist was Alexander Reinagle.<sup>16</sup>

The 1789-90 subscription series in York was held on the same terms as the previous year, but changes in personnel were beginning to occur with increasing frequency. Hudson was forced to bring in two actresses for the 1789-90 season – one for the early part of the season, the other for the New Year.<sup>17</sup> These met with more success than the ill-fated Maria Iliff. The *York Courant* said of one, Miss Leary, that she ‘has a very fine Voice and by the Specimen she gave that evening [of the sixth subscription concert] will certainly prove a great Acquisition to the York Concerts’.<sup>18</sup> In a second change, John Camidge gave up his role as organist to the series after thirty-four years in favour of his son Matthew; Matthew also took over his father’s benefit in the early part of the year, introducing piano-forte sonatas into the concerts more frequently and eventually dropping organ concertos almost entirely.<sup>19</sup>

In the subscription series of 1790-1, Miss Leary made an apparently welcome return as Frances Hudson’s co-soloist<sup>20</sup> – both women held benefits in early 1791.<sup>21</sup> More new faces were seen at these benefits and some of these newcomers may also have appeared in the subscription concerts. All the benefits included a bassoon concerto by a Mr. Wilson whose origins are not clear, and all but Mrs. Hudson’s benefit included solos by David Lawton, a cellist from Pontefract. Lawton was becoming more active throughout the area during this period<sup>22</sup> and in 1792 he was elected organist of Leeds after the resignation of Robert Jobson.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *YC* 25 August 1789.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 December 1789, 2 February 1790.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 February 1790.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 February 1790, 2 March 1790. Dr. D. Griffiths points out (in a letter to the author) that after February 1798 there were no organ concertos advertised until March 1806. Thereafter one was performed per year until April 1820 when they were dropped altogether.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 November 1790.

<sup>21</sup> *YCh* 28 January, 15 February 1791.

<sup>22</sup> e.g. *ibid.*, 6 September 1785, 31 May 1791.

<sup>23</sup> Hargrave, pp. 347-8. Jobson had a few years previously changed his name to Warburton, possibly as a condition of a bequest; he does not appear to have moved on and probably retired.

The only programme that survives from this period, from Mrs. Hudson's benefit on 6 March 1789 (at which the bulk of the vocal part was sung by Miss Hitchcock), shows that the reliance on solo concertos was abating.<sup>24</sup> (Ex. 13.1) Only one concerto was played, an organ concerto by John Camidge; the rest of the programme provided a variety of genres (overtures for single and double orchestras, a quintet for two violins, two violas and a cello, and a 'concertante') by principally contemporary composers – Daveaux, Rosetti and Pleyel. The concert ended with Handel's Coronation Anthem.<sup>25</sup> The singers are not named.

**Ex. 13.1: Benefit for Frances Hudson, 6 March 1789<sup>26</sup>**

	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Performer</b>
ACT I		
Overture for double orchestra	Bach	
Song		
Concertante	Daveau	
Song		
Organ concerto		Matthew Camidge
ACT II		
Overture	Rosetti	
Song		
Quintetto for two violins, two violas and cello	Pleyel	
Song		
Coronation Anthem [Zadok the Priest]	Handel	

## **II: The London Commemoration and local festivals**

Hudson's concerts of 1789 were not merely competing with Count Boruwlaski, who chose to return to the city in this week,<sup>27</sup> but also with a music festival in Manchester in which a number of London performers – Cramer, Cervetto, Sarjant and Parke – were

<sup>24</sup> YC 24 February 1789.

<sup>25</sup> Idem.

<sup>26</sup> YC 3 March 1789.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 25 August 1789.

augmented by a range of local performers: George Surr and Robert Barber of Manchester, Thomas Haigh, the music-seller from Halifax, and Nicholson the flute player from Liverpool (who had played flute concertos in the benefit for the Musical Fund in York earlier in the year).<sup>28</sup> Vocal soloists were also a mixture of locally and nationally known singers: Samuel Harrison and Elizabeth Billington from London, Edward Meredith (now settled in Liverpool) and Mrs. Shepley (who had moved from Leeds to Manchester).<sup>29</sup> Neither Hudson nor his wife took part in this festival.

This was the start of another spurt of oratorio performances in the area. A flurry of activity after the first Handel Commemoration in London in 1784 had ebbed a little since; now, however, fifteen festivals or separate performances of oratorios were put on over the next four years and a further five in the succeeding two years before the fashion faded again, almost exactly as the London commemorations died out.<sup>30</sup> Two more festivals were held before the end of 1789. In September in Scarborough, *Messiah* and *Joshua* were performed by Scarborough musicians with the aid of Mrs. Shepley and performers from Bradford;<sup>31</sup> a week or two later, a more ambitious series of concerts was organised in Hull by John Ashley from London. Ashley had been assistant conductor at the Handel Commemoration in 1784 and had conceived the idea of taking concerts and soloists out to provincial cities. His period of greatest activity was between 1788 and 1793, making the Hull festival one of his earliest forays into the provinces.<sup>32</sup> His usual practice was to enlist the aid of a local notable – in this case, Thomas Hawdon.<sup>33</sup> Hawdon was by now resident in Newcastle and was elected organist of All Saints there the day after the Hull Festival finished, but it appears that he was still

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<sup>28</sup> YC 10 March 1789.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 7 July 1789.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 11, p. 231, for tables giving figures of oratorio performances.

<sup>31</sup> YC 1 September 1789.

<sup>32</sup> Brian W. Pritchard, 'Ashley', *Grove*, 1, pp. 653-4.

<sup>33</sup> YC 7 July 1789.

dividing his time between the two cities.<sup>34</sup> The Hull festival was explicitly based on the Handel Commemoration in London and advertised that 'THE BAND will consist of the best Performers from the NOBLEMEN'S CONCERT in TOTTENHAM STREET, ST. PAUL'S, and the KING'S CHAPEL'.<sup>35</sup> All the named performers (except Hawdon) were from London.

The summer and autumn of 1790 saw a further increase in the performance of oratorios and musical festivals. One of the two annual benefits for the Musical Fund in York (just before Easter) was turned over to 'a Selection of Sacred Music', that is, extracts from Handel's oratorios. The regular performers were joined by Edward Meredith and the choir of the Minster, both boys and men.<sup>36</sup> A festival in Liverpool in September was followed by others in Leeds (October) and in Birmingham (November);<sup>37</sup> there is no indication of York performers taking part in these concerts (although performer lists do not survive for all concerts). In Lent 1791 (15 April), Hudson organised for the second year running an ambitious concert in the Great Assembly Room in Blake Street – a 'GRAND CONCERT of SACRED MUSIC, Selected from the Works of HANDEL'.<sup>38</sup> Hudson aimed at a total of more than sixty performers, both vocal and instrumental, and again wrote of engaging performers 'at a considerable Expence'; nevertheless the advertisements indicate that he was keeping the costs of the performances as low as possible. Instead of the Chapel Choirs of Hey and Shaw who generally sang the chorus parts in performances of this kind, he used the Minster Choir augmented by 'several Gentlemen in York' (presumably amateurs). Frances Hudson and Miss Leary sang the female vocal parts and Edward Meredith was reunited with his old singing partner from Durham, William Evance.<sup>39</sup> The cost of

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<sup>34</sup> *NC* 19 September 1789.

<sup>35</sup> *YC* 7 July 1789.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 March 1790.

<sup>37</sup> *YCh* 10 September 1790; *YC* 12 October, 23 November 1790.

<sup>38</sup> *YC* 29 March 1791.

<sup>39</sup> *YC* 29 March 1791.

tickets was high – Hudson charged 4s. per ticket, almost twice the usual cost for a single concert.

Immediately after Easter, another Musical Festival was organised for the second year running in Hull, but in place of Ashley's London players and singers who had appeared the previous year, local musicians took the principal roles. Tate Wilkinson's leader, George French, led the band, Meredith sang and Robert Barber joined the instrumental players. Thomas Wright of Newcastle played the organ.<sup>40</sup> No York performers are named in advertisements. Almost all the York musicians, however, went off to Pontefract in June for a performance of *Messiah* by local performers; the presence of Messrs. Hudson, Camidge, Knapton and Wilson may have been owing to their acquaintance with the organist there, David Lawton.<sup>41</sup>

The biggest event of the year however, was in York itself, a musical festival in which Hudson seems to have had little part. The first rumours had surfaced in March when the *York Courant* had printed a short paragraph suggesting that a festival was being planned which would feature the most celebrated soprano of the time, Madame Gertrude Mara, and which would be held in the Minster – 'a Place of all others, perhaps, the best calculated for a Treat of this Nature'.<sup>42</sup> John Ashley was back in the region; his collaborator this time was Matthew Camidge. Three of the festival's four concerts (between 15 and 18 August) were held in the Minster with a miscellaneous concert in the Great Assembly Rooms in Blake Street.<sup>43</sup> (Table 13.1)

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 12 April 1791.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 31 May 1791.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 8 March 1791.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 5 July 1791.

**Table 13.1: Musical Festival, York, 15-18 August 1791**

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Monday	15 August	Great Assembly Room (pm)	Grand Miscellaneous concert
Tuesday	16 August	Minster (am) Great Assembly Room (pm)	Grand Selection of Sacred Music Grand Miscellaneous concert
Wednesday	17 August	Minster (am)	<i>Messiah</i>
Thursday	18 August	Minster (am)	Grand Selection of Sacred Music

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Ashley brought with him a number of well-known London performers. Johann Christian Fischer, the oboist, was already known to York audiences, having played in Race Week concerts there in 1776 and 1778;<sup>44</sup> Charles Sarjant the trumpeter was a newcomer. Anna Maria Crouch, Samuel Harrison and Michael Kelly would have been known by name and any York music-lover who had ventured to Manchester for the Music Festival there in 1789 could have seen Harrison. Frances Hudson was named as one of the vocal soloists as was Meredith. By far the most prominent performer was Gertrude Mara who might have been remembered by some of the older audience members as the Miss Schmelling who had visited the city nearly twenty years earlier.<sup>45</sup>

The Festival was evidently a great success; the *York Courant* commented that:

we are happy to find that the Exertions of Mess. Camidge, jun. and Ashley, to render the Performance the most complete of the Kind ever experienced out of London, have been recompensed beyond their most sanguine Expectations.<sup>46</sup>

The paper approved of all the performers, although it remarked that ‘the Abilities of Madame Mara are so universally acknowledged that any Enconium is unnecessary’. It particularly liked one of Ashley’s sons who had led the band, but considered the most notable contribution instrumentally to be that of Matthew Camidge, who had played

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<sup>44</sup> *YC* 20 August 1776, 25 August 1778.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>46</sup> *YC* 23 August 1791.

piano forte sonatas and organ concertos. These, the *Courant* was happy to inform its readers, would shortly be published.<sup>47</sup> Ashley and his company of performers moved on to Newcastle, where they performed the same concerts,<sup>48</sup> and Edward Meredith thought it politic to pay his debts to Thomas Bewick.<sup>49</sup>

### III: Financial difficulties

Frances Hudson's benefit of February 1791 gave the first public indication that financial difficulties might again be affecting York concerts. The cost of the concert was raised from 2s. 6d. to 3s. on account, Hudson claimed, of extra expenses:

The Gentlemen Directors of the Assembly-Rooms having ordered that the Great Assembly-Room shall not be used for any Concert without being lighted with wax-candles, Mrs. Hudson is therefore under the necessity of advancing her benefit tickets to 3s. each.<sup>50</sup>

In fact the Directors' requirement that the rooms should only be lit by expensive spermacetti candles (to avoid damage to the decorations by inferior candles) had been in force for almost a year, as indeed had been the rise in the cost of the benefits; Hudson's addition to her advertisement suggests that adverse comments had been made by concert-goers. Privately, the Gentlemen Directors of the Assembly Rooms had already expressed alarm over the financial status of the concert series and in January 1791 had taken action. Fearing perhaps a repetition of the events of 1742, when instruments and music books had been surreptitiously removed from the rooms to prevent them being seized to pay off debts,<sup>51</sup> the Assembly Room Directors had requested an inventory of all the property and:

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<sup>47</sup> *YC* 23 August 1791.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 15.

<sup>49</sup> **TAWS** 1269/13 Bewick's Accounts, 20 April 1791.

<sup>50</sup> *YCh* 28 January 1791.

<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 3.

order'd ... that all the Instruments and Music that are now lent out be call'd in and for the future be lock'd up and put under the care of Mr. Morley [the Steward] and not lent to any Person whatsoever on any Pretence unless by the Consent and Direction of three Directors under their Hands.<sup>52</sup>

Despite their concerns, the Directors did not hesitate to increase the cost of hiring the room for the concerts, from twenty guineas to thirty.<sup>53</sup>

The terms for the 1791-2 subscription series reflected this financial pressure. Although the number of concerts remained constant at thirteen, Hudson increased the cost of subscription by almost a third – from one guinea to £1 7s. The cost of nightly tickets also rose to bring them into line with the new price of benefit tickets: from 2s. 6d. to 3s. A further increase was imposed on those who wished to buy a ticket that could be transferred to friends and relatives, the cost of these rising by 50% to one and a half guineas.<sup>54</sup> Hudson blamed the increase on the Gentlemen Directors' insistence on wax candles, but he had added to his own expenses by hiring a young London singer – Miss Dall – to share the vocal parts with his wife. The *York Courant* approved of Miss Dall's singing – she 'was received with every flattering Mark of Applause which she justly merited' – and of her presence which, it said, added to Hudson's 'Exertions to render the Concerts so truly respectable'.<sup>55</sup>

Also appearing in York for the first time was an oboist, John Erskine. Erskine was described as 'of London, late of Manchester';<sup>56</sup> he had been resident in Manchester since at least 1787 when he played in a benefit for Robert Barber,<sup>57</sup> and had been active in oratorio performances in the area, playing for instance at the Manchester Musical Festival in August 1789.<sup>58</sup> He played in Manchester concerts regularly until November

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<sup>52</sup> **YRO** M23:2 ARM 17 January 1791.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 December 1791.

<sup>54</sup> *YC* 6 December 1791.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 December 1791.

<sup>56</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>57</sup> I am grateful to Dr. J. Burchell for this information.

<sup>58</sup> *YC* 7 July 1789.



1790,<sup>59</sup> but only a month later seems to have settled in York. Almost immediately, he set up as a teacher of oboe and flute<sup>60</sup> and he held his first benefit in the city on 20 April 1792, suggesting that he was already regarded as a stalwart of the subscription series.<sup>61</sup> He also appeared at the theatre with Tate Wilkinson's company and his prominence there was sufficient to earn him a benefit in mid-1792, the only musician apart from French to be granted an individual benefit.<sup>62</sup>

Miss Dall moved on in April 1792 for greater things ('engaged by SALOMON and HAYDN for their Concerts in Hanover Square, London'),<sup>63</sup> but Hudson was already planning to bring even more prominent performers to the city. Yet again he was planning to revive the Race Week concerts and the *York Chronicle* nostalgically hoped that 'the Concerts will be restored to that degree of respectability they possessed when Mr. Giardini attended them'.<sup>64</sup> Hudson may have been unconsciously emulating Matthias Hawdon, who, in the midst of financial troubles in 1781, put on an expensive Assize Week concert to try and recoup his fortunes. Hudson hired again the cellist Alexander Reinagle together with his friend and associate John Mahon the clarinettist, and asked the ever-popular Matthew Camidge to play the organ. But his star performer was Louisa Gautherot, that unusual phenomenon for the eighteenth century – a female violinist.<sup>65</sup> Hudson may have obtained her attendance through the good offices of Erskine, who had played in a subscription series at the Rotunda in Dublin in the 1790-1 season, at which time Gautherot had led the band. Mahon and Reinagle had also been members of the Dublin band.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> I am grateful to Dr. J. Burchell for this information.

<sup>60</sup> *YCh* 6 January 1792.

<sup>61</sup> *YC* 10 April 1792.

<sup>62</sup> *YCh* 10 May 1792. Wilkinson's accounts do not cover this period; it is therefore impossible to tell if Erskine was employed by Wilkinson on a regular basis throughout the year or merely during the York season.

<sup>63</sup> *YC* 2 March 1792.

<sup>64</sup> *YCh* 16 August 1792.

<sup>65</sup> W.T. Parke, *Musical Memoirs*, I, 129. Quoted in Brian Boydell, *Rotunda Music*, p. 144.

<sup>66</sup> Boydell, *Rotunda Music*, pp. 143-6.

In the two concerts, on Tuesday and Thursday evenings of the Race Week (at the end of August), Gautherot led the band, played a violin concerto and sang the vocal parts. On Friday morning she gave an extra concert for her own benefit.<sup>67</sup> The *York Chronicle* described her performance as ‘excellent’, remarking of her violin playing that ‘her great execution and clearness of tone, given in the most impressive manner, afforded highest satisfaction’.<sup>68</sup> Mahon’s tone on the clarinet was ‘most exquisite’ and Reinagle was ‘greatly applauded’.<sup>69</sup>

The *York Courant*, after the first concert of the new subscription series in December 1791, put its weight behind Hudson expressing a ‘[sincere] hope that his Exertions will meet every Encouragement from a generous Public’.<sup>70</sup> The *Chronicle* was more sanguine, stating firmly that ‘there can be little doubt ... but that the Concerts ... undertaken with so much spirit and conducted with so much professional ability, will obtain from the public the amplest patronage and encouragement’.<sup>71</sup> For the time being, this optimism seemed well-founded. Hudson retained the same terms for the new subscription series. Frances Hudson continued to be listed in advertisements and to hold a benefit, but two other singers shared the vocal part with her and she probably did not take a large part in proceedings.<sup>72</sup> The origins of both the extra singers are unclear. Miss Milne may have been an actress; Thomas Unthank, the first regular male singer at the concerts, was four years later admitted as a probationer singing man at the Minster.<sup>73</sup> The Minster personnel seem to have taken a much larger part in this series than in previous years; the entire choir appeared in several subscription concerts and in the benefit for the Musical Fund in March 1793.<sup>74</sup> The fifth subscription concert, which

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<sup>67</sup> *YCh* 23 August 1792.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 August 1792.

<sup>69</sup> *YC* 20 December 1791.

<sup>70</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>71</sup> *YCh* 23 August 1792.

<sup>72</sup> *YC* 19 December 1792, 4 March 1793.

<sup>73</sup> *YML* H9/2 Chapter Acts, 1756-1771, 31 August 1795.

<sup>74</sup> *YC* 18 March 1793.

took the form of a tribute in honour of the Queen's birthday, ended with a performance of 'God save Great George our King':

and an additional Verse in Honour of the Queen, performed in a most capital Stile, assisted by the whole Orchestra, and by a Number of Vocal Performers, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Hudson, Miss Milne, Mr. Unthank, the Gentlemen and Boys from the Cathedral, and many Gentlemen in the City.<sup>75</sup>

The patriotic note, prompted no doubt by the recent declaration of war by France, was echoed at the theatre, where *God save the King* and *Rule Britannia* were performed on 23 February.<sup>76</sup>

Towards the end of the 1792-3 season, Milne departed for London and Hudson replaced her with Rosemond Mountain 'from the Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden'.<sup>77</sup> For the Musical Fund benefit, Edward Meredith returned briefly. By the time of the next year's concerts (1793-4 season), Frances Hudson was so ill she could not sing at all. She was named in all advertisements as vocal soloist but Milne and Thomas Unthank filled her place, and although she held a benefit in February 1794 as usual, she added to the advertisement for the concert an explanatory paragraph of apologies:

Mrs. HUDSON presents her Duty to the Ladies and Gentlemen of York and its Vicinity, and hopes that her long Illness will apologize for her not attending the Concert this Winter ...<sup>78</sup>

She was entirely absent from concerts in the city after 19 March 1794 and died at the end of the month.<sup>79</sup> In her absence, her husband was forced into hiring a long succession of replacement vocal soloists, chiefly actresses from Tate Wilkinson's company (including Wilkinson's daughter-in-law), women who usually sang two or three concerts in the company of Thomas Unthank and then departed.<sup>80</sup> Mrs. Shepley –

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<sup>75</sup> *YC* 21 January 1793.

<sup>76</sup> e.g. *YCh* 21 February 1793.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 May 1793.

<sup>78</sup> *YC* 10 February 1794.

<sup>79</sup> She died on 31 March and was buried at St. Olave's, 3 April. I am indebted to Dr. D. Griffiths for this information.

<sup>80</sup> e.g. *YC* 21 April 1794.

who was becoming as well-known and sought after in the singing of oratorios locally as Hudson had been – also sang regularly in the 1794-5 season.<sup>81</sup> Edward Meredith returned to the city on a regular basis: for concerts of Sacred Music held for the Musical Fund and for Erskine's benefit in 1797.<sup>82</sup> Erskine was thriving in the city, extending his teaching activities to include the guitar<sup>83</sup> and holding two benefits a year, one in the concert hall, the other at the theatre. He was a regular soloist in all York concerts and frequently performed at concerts elsewhere, in Leeds, for instance, and in Wakefield.<sup>84</sup>

#### **IV: Hudson's withdrawal from concert-promotion**

Another local favourite, Thomas Haxby, was feeling his age at this period; in the summer of 1788 he had retired from shop-keeping, passing the shop in Blake Street on to his former apprentice Samuel Knapton. Haxby's stated reason was that he wished to concentrate on manufacturing 'in order to pay a close Attention to the Making, Repairing and Tuning of ... Instruments';<sup>85</sup> his associates included Edward Tomlinson, the husband of his long-dead sister, and the couple's son, Thomas. When Haxby died, in November 1796, 'after a painful illness, which he bore with Christian fortitude and resignation',<sup>86</sup> his brother-in-law and nephew took over the business.<sup>87</sup>

The month after Haxby's death, Hudson's advertisements for the 1796-7 subscription series make it clear that the series was in financial difficulties yet again. The number of concerts was reduced from thirteen to twelve; the cost of subscription remained constant except for a cut in the cost of transferable tickets – the most

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<sup>81</sup> *YC* 27 October 1794.

<sup>82</sup> e.g. *ibid.*, 16 March 1795, 6 February 1797.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 October 1793.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 October 1795, 6 July 1795.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 October 1788.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 November 1796.

<sup>87</sup> *Idem.*

expensive.<sup>88</sup> At the end of the series, Hudson defaulted on his payment of rent to the Directors of the Assembly Rooms. The 1797-8 series saw an even more drastic alteration. The number of concerts was slashed to eight and the subscription reduced to its old level of one guinea.<sup>89</sup> This suggests a considerable decline in interest. Transferable tickets were also reduced for the second year running, but the nightly ticket for non-subscribers was raised from 3s. to 3s. 6d. Hudson may have found the numbers of subscribers decreasing and more people turning up for individual concerts on a casual basis. He commented in the advertisement for this latter series that he had been ‘a very considerable loser by the former plan’.<sup>90</sup>

The series itself was much as it had always been and the by-now-usual variety of vocal soloists took part – Unthank, Mrs. Shepley and her daughter, and Edward Meredith. On 13 April 1798, Hudson put on a special concert in aid of ‘the Voluntary Contributions now open at the Bank for the Defence of the Country’.<sup>91</sup> This was a lavish concert, using the Minster Choir and including much patriotic music. Hudson himself sang one aria (Handel’s ‘Arm, arm ye brave’), Miss Shepley and Thomas Unthank sang others and all joined in a concluding performance of *God Save the King*.<sup>92</sup> (Appendix 1) The performers ‘afforded their assistance gratuitously’,<sup>93</sup> and by charging 3s. 6d. a ticket, Hudson contributed £34 17s. to the fund.<sup>94</sup>

The new arrangements for the subscription series did not solve Hudson’s problems. In October 1798 he was in danger of being refused the use of the Assembly Rooms for defaulting again on the payment of his rent; he was forced to plead his case, pointing out ‘the small encouragement which he had in his Concerts last year’.<sup>95</sup> The

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<sup>88</sup> YC 24 October 1796.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 13 November 1797.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 13 November 1797.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 26 March 1798.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 9 April 1798.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 16 April 1798.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 23 April 1798.

<sup>95</sup> YRO M23:2 ARM 20 October 1798.

Directors eventually decided to remit the 1797 payment on condition Hudson paid in advance the rent for the new series, which he did.<sup>96</sup> His advertisement for the 1798-9 season in the *York Courant* was, however, cautious in the extreme. Hudson refused to go ahead unless 'he should be honoured with a Subscription nearly adequate to the expence of the undertaking'.<sup>97</sup> He proposed eight concerts on the same terms as the previous year and:

as the expences attending the Concert are very great ... Mr. Hudson requests to be favoured with the names of such Ladies and Gentlemen as intend to become subscribers as soon as possible, in order that he may take the earliest opportunity of engaging Performers.<sup>98</sup>

The necessary subscriptions were apparently forthcoming, as the first concert went ahead on 14 December with Miss Shepley and Edward Meredith as soloists.<sup>99</sup> Meredith was by now accepted as the regular male soloist in the series and performed in every concert and all the benefits in early 1799; as a result, he advertised in April 1799 that 'from the Kind approbation he has experienced in his endeavours to please, he is emboldened to have 'A CONCERT OF Vocal and Instrumental Music ... For his BENEFIT'.<sup>100</sup> He was joined as vocal soloist in this concert by his daughter.

Meredith did not return for the next series, however, in which vocal parts were taken by an actress, Mrs. Hindmarsh, and by Charles Radcliffe, a new singing man at the Minster.<sup>101</sup> The series went ahead, but Hudson had at last had enough and refused to continue. The series was taken up by John Erskine who continued to run it until well into the nineteenth century; its financial status however remained precarious.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> YRO M23:2 ARM 20 October 1798; also M23:4 ARA 14 October 1798.

<sup>97</sup> YC 12 November 1798.

<sup>98</sup> Idem.

<sup>99</sup> YC 26 November 1798.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 8 April 1799.

<sup>101</sup> e.g. YC 26 December 1803.

<sup>102</sup> Griffiths, *A Musical Place*, p. 122.

# 14

## **DURHAM IN THE 1790s**

### **I: Withdrawal from Sunderland**

Public concert-giving was also in decline in Durham during the 1790s. The quality of the Cathedral choir was no longer undisputed; its personnel were gradually withdrawing from involvement in concerts and few other people were apparently willing, or able, to take their place.

At the beginning of the decade, there are signs of Thomas Ebdon's withdrawal from concert-promotion outside Durham. His involvement in Newcastle concert life had been short-lived; his activities in Sunderland lasted rather longer. The winter subscription series there and the King's birthday concert on 4 June, both of which Ebdon had run since around 1770, continued until the end of the 1780s. After Meredith's departure in 1788, the vocal parts were taken by his replacement, Reynolds; Thomas

Wright of Newcastle led the band, being preferred to Robinson who still led the Cathedral band in Durham. Little is known of the repertoire at these concerts although an advertisement for the sixth and last concert of the 1788-9 series included:

the March and Anthem, composed for the Performance at the Installation of the provincial Grand Master, for the county of Durham. – Vocal Parts by Mr. Reynold, the Gentlemen of Sunderland, and the Boys of Durham Choir. A Clarinet Concerto, by Mr. Wright. The whole to conclude with the Song and Chorus of God save the King, harmonised, and Symphonies added by Mr. Ebdon.<sup>1</sup>

The Durham connection with Sunderland was strengthened by George Goodchild, organist of St. John's, who used William Evance as the regular vocal soloist at his benefits; Goodchild used Thomas Wright as his leader.<sup>2</sup>

Ebdon's involvement in Sunderland came to an abrupt end. No winter series for the 1789-90 season was advertised, nor was a King's birthday concert for 1790. Ebdon had apparently pulled out of concert activities in the town but not, it seems, for lack of public support. A winter series for the 1790-1 season was immediately organised by George Goodchild with Wright and Evance as his soloists; six concerts were put on, running monthly from October. The price of subscription was not advertised, but the cost of admission on the night to each concert (which were all separately advertised) was 3s. The price included admission to the ball after the concert. In mid-1791, Goodchild also took over the King's birthday concerts, raising the admission price to 3s. 6d. but including the extra attraction of tea.<sup>3</sup> Repertoire is rarely mentioned, apart from the promise of the inevitable clarinet concerto played by Wright and an occasional harpsichord work played by Evance.<sup>4</sup> Goodchild offered the 1791-2 season of concerts on much the same terms,<sup>5</sup> but seems to have died shortly after this series was concluded,

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<sup>1</sup> *NC* 7 March 1789.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. *NA* 3 October 1789.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 May 1791.

<sup>4</sup> *NCh* 28 May 1791.

<sup>5</sup> *NC* 15 October 1791.



in early 1792. The King's birthday concert that year was therefore put on by Thomas Wright who gathered together a wide range of performers:

The Vocal Part, First Violin, and Clarinet Concerto, by Mr. WRIGHT ... As the Gentlemen Performers, not only of Sunderland, but of Newcastle also, have kindly promised Mr. Wright their assistance on that night, the Band will be much more numerous than usual.<sup>6</sup>

The omission of performers from Durham is very noticeable; even William Evance, the usual vocal soloist, was absent, although he was almost certainly available – he sang at a charity service in Newcastle only a few days later.<sup>7</sup> All the performers mentioned by Wright are amateurs and it may be that by taking on all the solo roles himself, he was trying to keep costs to a minimum, and thereby make the maximum profit possible from the concert.<sup>8</sup>

Wright may also have run the King's birthday concert the following year (1793), as he certainly did in 1794. By this time England and France were at war and Wright put on a concert that reflected that fact, including such patriotic martial music as:

an Invocation to the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, composed expressly for the Occasion by Mr. Wright. A Loyal Glee, the Words by a Gentleman of Sunderland. – The much admired Piece of Imitative Music, called the BATTLE of PRAGUE, by Kotzwara.<sup>9</sup>

These pieces were in addition to a clarinet concerto and a conversation piece for clarinet, tenor (viola) and bass, both composed by Wright.<sup>10</sup> By the winter, Sunderland had a new organist capable of running a subscription series, a Mr. Weyllandt, who put on four concerts between December 1794 and March the following year. The change of organiser does not seem to have changed the type of concert radically; Wright continued to lead the band and play clarinet concertos, while the vocal soloist was John Friend

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<sup>6</sup> *NC* 26 May 1792.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 June 1792.

<sup>8</sup> Wright presumably did not share Robert Jobson's views on unacceptable exertions [See Chapter 11].

<sup>9</sup> *NCh* 24 May 1794.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem.*

from Durham Cathedral.<sup>11</sup> Weyllandt may have run another series the following year,<sup>12</sup> but by 1797 the only concerts held in Sunderland (unless the subscription series continued unadvertised) were isolated concerts with a military flavour – a concert given by the Bands of the Westlowland Fencibles and the Royal West Regiment of Militia in April, and, in November, a benefit for the widows and orphans of seamen killed in battles between the English and the Dutch.<sup>13</sup>

## II: ‘A new encouragement to piety’<sup>14</sup>

Although Ebdon withdrew from concert-promotion in Sunderland around 1790, he continued with his usual activities in Durham, participating in both public and private concerts. The Sharp family (Dr. Sharp was Archdeacon of Northumberland) were pre-eminent in these private concerts, giving a number of substantial performances in their house in the College: *Acis and Galatea* in February 1790, and *Alexander’s Feast* in February 1791. The latter concert (and probably the earlier one too) was directed by Ebdon.<sup>15</sup>

The winter subscription series in Durham seemed to be thriving. Since 1784, the series had consisted of eight concerts held fortnightly from early October; a substantial break for Christmas usually meant that the series ended in late January or early February. Subscription rates remained at half a guinea with nightly tickets at 3s.<sup>16</sup> Ebdon also continued to run Race and Assize Week concerts; advertisements for these concerts are more detailed than those for the winter series, and indicate that Ebdon used Robinson and Ashton as instrumentalists and William Evance as the main vocal soloist.

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<sup>11</sup> NC 6 December 1794.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 12 December 1795.

<sup>13</sup> NCh 15 April 1797; NC 18 November 1797.

<sup>14</sup> NC 13 October 1792.

<sup>15</sup> NA 6 February 1790, 26 February 1791.

<sup>16</sup> NC 2 October 1784.

The choir still attended the annual Feast of the Sons of the Clergy, which by now was held alternately in Newcastle and Durham; reviews of their contribution in 1789 suggest that Ebdon was at the height of his powers. The *Newcastle Courant* remarked that:

several select pieces of music were performed by the Gentlemen of the Choir of Durham Cathedral, under the direction of the celebrated Mr. Ebdon, who, with his wonted taste and judgement, delighted the congregation with his excellent performance on the organ.<sup>17</sup>

The singing men had by this time established an annual benefit in the city, held normally towards the end of February; the earliest known of these concerts was the benefit for John Friend in 1786.<sup>18</sup> Most are known only from reviews published in local papers. Robinson, Ashton and Friend held a benefit in February 1790 for which, surprisingly, they hired another vocal soloist – the actress Mrs. Marshall from the Newcastle company. Thomas Wright, who was by now a regular performer in Durham as a clarinettist, played a concerto. The *Newcastle Advertiser's* review was more concerned to stress the quality of the company than of the music, listing the distinguished members of the audience – ‘Sir John Eden and family, the High Sheriff, Lady Clavering, Sir Henry and Lady Vane, Mr. Burdon, &c’. It remarked however that

the whole of the performance went off with distinguished Applause. – Mr. Wright, from Newcastle, on the Clarinet, was admirable, and claimed particular attention as did Mrs. Marshall, who sang her songs with much taste and execution.<sup>19</sup>

Around sixty people attended the concert and the ball that followed.<sup>20</sup>

Wright returned for the 1791 concert, which was for the benefit of Ashton, Robinson, Friend and Evance. The programme was reminiscent of a York benefit, being heavily biased towards concertos: for clarinet (Wright), violin (Robinson) and harpsichord (Evance). A flute quartet was also included in the concert.<sup>21</sup> The 1792

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<sup>17</sup> *NC* 5 September 1789.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 February 1786. See Chapter 9.

<sup>19</sup> *NA* 27 February 1790.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>21</sup> *NA* 5 March 1791.

benefit was slightly marred by William Evance 'labouring under a severe cold', but the programme, which included several choruses by Handel, a harpsichord concerto by Evance, and a string quartet by Pleyel was 'such as merited and received the warmest approbation of the company'.<sup>22</sup> In a surprisingly modern turn of phrase, the *Newcastle Advertiser* remarked that: 'Wright, as usual, was great'.<sup>23</sup>

By the summer of the same year, Wright was leading the Cathedral band in place of Thomas Robinson in the annual Assize Concert.<sup>24</sup> It is not possible to say whether this was a deliberate decision on Ebdon's part or was merely due to Robinson's unavailability. The advertisement for the subscription series, which began as usual in early October, does not indicate soloists.<sup>25</sup> Ebdon held the second concert of this series a fortnight after the first, on 16 October,<sup>26</sup> but the series was overshadowed by the excitement of a Musical Festival to be held in the city.

The idea of a Musical Festival may have been prompted by the success of a large-scale festival in Newcastle the previous year.<sup>27</sup> The two festivals, however, were very different in a number of respects. The Newcastle event was one of John Ashley's touring festivals; the Durham festival was much more of a local affair and was to be held for the benefit not of the performers but of the new Infirmary being built in the city.<sup>28</sup> Concerts were very rarely held for the benefit of charities in the Newcastle/Durham area; this was the first of its kind since Charles Avison senior's concerts for the benefit of the Newcastle Infirmary in the early 1750s. The festival was organised and managed by the Rev. Mr. Parker, rector of St. Mary le Bow, a small church standing close to the

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<sup>22</sup> *NA* 25 February 1792. The appearance of string quartets at northern programmes was unusual; Thomas Wright however included several in benefits in Newcastle.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>24</sup> *NA* 28 July 1792. No record survives of a Race Week concert in this year.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 September 1792.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 15.

<sup>28</sup> *NA* 22 September 1792.

Cathedral.<sup>29</sup> Parker intended to combine the benefit for the Infirmary with the dedication of a new organ in his church. Information about the proposed festival was slow to emerge; the principal item of interest as far as the *Newcastle Advertiser* was concerned was that:

we can announce to the Ladies, who intend honouring the Musical Performances at Durham with their presence, that Mr. Parker, with his usual attention, has given directions to have the chancel and altar fitted up in a very commodious manner for their reception.<sup>30</sup>

The *Newcastle Courant* published a very long letter from an anonymous correspondent pointing out the moral value of such festivals.

Every Organ erected in one of our churches, is a new encouragement to piety, – a new incentive to a purity and fervour of devotion. We are all acquainted with the powerful, the astonishing effects of music; if that divine art is too frequently, and too successfully prostituted to our meaner feelings, let it not be forgotten, that with a fine magic, it awakens, and accelerates our noblest sentiments and passions; – it inspires the eloquence of the patriot, and accelerates the *military* defender of his country to the glorious alternatives of victory or death. But to none of the best energies of the human mind, to none of our sublimest pursuits, is it more favourable than to RELIGION.<sup>31</sup>

Parker's performers were a mixture of locally and nationally known performers with the emphasis very much on the former. The vocal soloists consisted of Miss Worrall (soprano), William Evance (alto), John Friend (tenor) and, inevitably, Edward Meredith (bass). Robinson led the band, Thomas Wright was probably principal second violin, Mr. Hackwood 'of the King's Band, London' was principal viola, and William Shield, the composer, returned to his native North-East to play principal cello with George Ashton as his deputy. Other local professional musicians taking part included a number of singing men as instrumentalists, the son of the organist of Stockton (violin),

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<sup>29</sup> *NA* 29 September 1792.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 October 1792.

<sup>31</sup> *NC* 13 October 1792.

and Charles Avison jnr. (double bass).<sup>32</sup> Local amateurs also assisted and some, unusually, were named in advertisements, including the Rev. Mr. Nesfield, vicar of Chester-le-Street, and Mr. Bainbridge jnr. (son of a local landowner) who played principal flutes. Ebdon was the organist.

The festival consisted of three concerts between Wednesday 17 October and Friday 19 October; taking into account the second subscription concert on 16 October, this meant almost a full week of concerts. (Table 14.1) A mixture of morning and evening concerts presented a programme very similar to John Ashley's festivals; on Wednesday morning, a Selection of Sacred Music was performed at St. Mary le Bow; three acts, of nine or ten items each, included extracts from, amongst other works, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Solomon*, *Theodora*, *Samson*, *Deborah*, *Israel in Egypt* and *Jephtha*, with overtures or concertos opening each act. Thursday evening's concert in the brand new theatre began with *Acis and Galatea* and ended with 'A Grand Miscellaneous Act' of music by Haydn and Pleyel together with a clarinet concerto by Wright and a flute concerto by the Rev. Mr. Nesfield. On Friday morning the company returned to the church for a performance of *Messiah*.

**Table 14.1: Musical Festival, Durham, 17-19 October 1792**

Wednesday	17 October	St. Mary le Bow	A Grand Selection of Sacred Music (am)
Thursday	18 October	New Theatre	<i>Acis and Galatea</i> and a Grand Miscellaneous Act (pm)
Friday	19 October	St. Mary le Bow	<i>Messiah</i> (am)

<sup>32</sup> Stockton organists in the second half of the century were all from the same family. In 1792, the organist was Robert Wright; his son, Thomas, succeeded him in 1799. Thomas was also a violinist and composer, and led the local Volunteer Band. Even in his own day, he was frequently confused with Thomas Wright of Newcastle, to whom he was not related; the two men were almost exactly the same age. (Thomas Wright of Newcastle was probably two years older.) Both the British Library and Newcastle Central Library are incorrect in their attribution of the respective compositions of the two. To avoid confusion, in this dissertation the Stockton man will always be referred to as 'Thomas Wright of Stockton'. He held a subscription series in Stockton in at least one year [*NCh* 5 November 1785] at which Meredith and others of the Durham Choir sang the vocal parts, and organised a performance of *Messiah* in Darlington in 1787 [*NC* 15 September 1787].

The *Newcastle Courant*'s reviews of the concerts suggest that the festival was, musically at least, a success. The anonymous writer felt obliged to mention by name each of the principal performers even if only to say that they 'had much merit', but most enthusiasm was reserved for the vocal performers, who had been augmented at the last minute by Mrs. Shepley from Manchester, perhaps on Meredith's recommendation.

Miss Worrall sang her songs with much sweetness and simplicity; and Mrs. Shepley justified the liberality of Mr. Parker, who engaged her but a few days previous to the performance. – Evance displayed great taste and scientific skill; and Meredith, as usual, was wonderfully great.<sup>33</sup>

The *Courant* went into raptures over Miss Worrall after her performance at the last concert; she also apparently made a great impression on the Rev. Mr. Parker.

Miss Worrall, whose purity of taste, harmony of voice, and modesty of manners, highly distinguished her to all who heard and saw her, did not less distinguish her to the Rev. Mr. Parker. Her terms were as low as ten guineas; Mr. Parker gave her sixteen – raised a subscription at the Assembly of eleven – and then defrayed all her other expenses.<sup>34</sup>

The paper's praise for the instrumentalists was more tepid; it also thanked the large number of 'Gentlemen performers' who had assisted, naming a number of them – at least two vicars and several members of local gentry families. The only note of criticism was saved for the new organ, of which the reviewer remarked that 'Ebdon made the most of the organ, which, by the by, is too small for so large a band'.<sup>35</sup>

When the final accounts were submitted, the proceeds of the festival, and of a collection made at a charity sermon preached the following Sunday at St. Mary le Bow,

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<sup>33</sup> NA 20 October 1792.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 27 October 1792.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 20 October 1792.

came (after payment of expenses) to a total of £50 8s. 4d.<sup>36</sup> At least some of the visiting performers remained in the area; William Shield, for instance, seized the opportunity to put on a benefit concert in South Shields but he used none of the Durham performers, preferring instead to use Thomas Wright, some of the Newcastle waits and a number of actors and actresses from the Newcastle theatre company.<sup>37</sup>

### **III: The abandonment of concerts in Durham**

After the excitement of the Music Festival, the winter subscription series continued with Thomas Wright as leader in at least the last concert of the series, in Robinson's unexplained absence.<sup>38</sup> In mid-1793, Ebdon used a busy professional life as a reason for declining the office of Alderman in the city.

On Monday, came on the election for an Alderman of the City of Durham, ... when Mr. Thomas Ebdon, organist of the Cathedral, was, by a large majority, declared fully elected. – On Thursday, Mr. Ebdon attended the Court and politely thanked the gentlemen for the honour they had conferred on him, but begged leave to decline accepting the office, as it would interfere with the time necessarily required by his professional duties.<sup>39</sup>

The Council fined Ebdon (as was usual in such cases) but added that

[the] said fine was fixed at so low a sum [five guineas] on Account of it appearing that the said Thomas Ebdon by reason of his profession of a Musician was obliged to be frequently from home.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *NA* 3 November 1792. This was meagre compared to the amounts raised at festivals in Leicester 1785 (£380 12s. 10d), Sheffield 1787 (approximately £600) and Birmingham 1790 (£958 14s. 8d). On the other hand, not all the money always found its way into the hands of the charities for which it was intended; at Sheffield, in 1788, the income from tickets etc. was £465 6s. but it was estimated that no more than £40 would go to charity [*YC* 27 September 1785, 28 May 1787, 26 August 1788, 23 November 1790].

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 December 1792.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 January 1793.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 July 1793.

<sup>40</sup> *DRO Du*/1/35/3 Durham Corporation, Minutes of election of officers, 25 July 1793.



In view of the fact that Ebdon had given up his concert-promoting activities in Sunderland and that no references to leaves of absence exist in Cathedral records, his 'being from home' is probably attributable to teaching activities within the area.

The 1793 Assize Week concert went ahead as usual with Thomas Wright as leader,<sup>41</sup> and the winter subscription series attracted 'a fashionable and respectable company'.<sup>42</sup> Then, as suddenly as he had withdrawn from Sunderland, Ebdon abandoned his concerts in Durham. It is difficult to understand why he should have done so. Nothing remains to suggest financial difficulties and Ebdon remained active, carrying out his duties at the Cathedral and occasionally making appearances at concerts elsewhere. In April 1794, for instance, he directed a concert of sacred music to celebrate the opening of a new organ at Tynemouth church, taking with him the entire choir, with Evance as one of the vocal soloists and Wright leading a band that was augmented by the Band of the West York Regiment of Militia, stationed at Tynemouth Barracks.<sup>43</sup> His last known action as concert-promoter was to hold an Assize Concert in Durham in August 1794.<sup>44</sup> After that the city was apparently without any concerts at all for more than two years until in October 1796, a new singing man, James Radcliffe, advertised a benefit.<sup>45</sup> Radcliffe was always in financial difficulties<sup>46</sup> and the benefit was clearly designed to alleviate his problems. The concert, on 4 October, used only Durham performers with the exception of a Miss Radcliffe from Oxford who was probably a relation. The band was that of the Cathedral concerts, led by Thomas Robinson; Evance and Friend shared the vocal parts. Radcliffe appealed to the cosmopolitan tastes of his

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<sup>41</sup> *NC* 20 July 1793.

<sup>42</sup> *NA* 12 October 1793.

<sup>43</sup> *NC* 19 April 1794.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 August 1794.

<sup>45</sup> Sworn in July 1795 [*CA DAB* 20 July 1795].

<sup>46</sup> See below.

audience by offering ‘*SELECT PIECES, AS PERFORMED AT HARRISON and KNYVET’s VOCAL CONCERTS, London*’.<sup>47</sup>

The concert may have been sufficiently popular to convince music-lovers in Durham that a new subscription series was a viable proposition. Only six weeks after Radcliffe’s benefit, a new series was proposed. The series, however, was not of Ebdon’s making; according to the advertisements, the principal movers were ‘A COMMITTEE of GENTLEMEN’.<sup>48</sup> Four concerts were proposed at roughly fortnightly intervals, two before Christmas (on 22 November and 13 December) and two after (on 10 and 24 January 1797) for a subscription of half a guinea or 3s. 6d. a night. A proviso was added that the series would only go ahead if sufficient subscribers were found; that condition was apparently met, as the first concert at least took place. The performers were the usual Cathedral band led by Robinson, and Thomas Wright was as ever brought in to play a clarinet concerto. Ebdon’s part seems to have been limited to playing the harpsichord.<sup>49</sup> A review in the *Newcastle Advertiser* suggests that the first concert was well-attended and well-received,<sup>50</sup> and it is probable that the rest of the series went ahead as planned. But it was not apparently successful enough to be repeated. No further subscription series were advertised before the end of the century.

#### IV: The decline of the choir

A decline in the quality of the singing men in the last decade of the century may have contributed to the general decline in music-making in the city. After Meredith’s departure in 1788, his replacement, Reynolds, seems to have been an excellent singer,

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<sup>47</sup> *NA* 1 October 1796. Harrison and Knyvett offered chiefly English songs at their concerts in London (established in 1792). Simon McVeigh suggests that this may have appealed to the nationalistic mood of the times [McVeigh, *Concert Life*, p. 18].

<sup>48</sup> *NC* 12 November 1796.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 November 1796

<sup>50</sup> *NA* 26 November 1796.

but he resigned in July 1791,<sup>51</sup> and there was apparently no immediate replacement. In August of the same year the *Newcastle Advertiser* was critical of the choir's performance at a service designed to greet the new Bishop of Durham.

In the evening Service, that beautiful composition of 'Croft's Blessed is the People,' was sung by the Gentlemen of the Choir; – and we cannot help observing, that we never felt the loss of MEREDITH's powers, so forcibly as in the Solo 'For thou art the Glory,' in which he used to sing with such majestic ability. In short, that Anthem, when formerly performed in the Cathedral, supported by the fine tones of MARLOW, the taste and scientific judgement of EVANCE, and the powers of MEREDITH, was such a treat to Connoisseurs of Music, as not to be equalled out of the Metropolis.<sup>52</sup>

The *Advertiser* may have been indulging in nostalgia, but a more impartial observer also condemned the standard of singing at the Cathedral. Jonathan Grey of York, travelling around the area with his father in August 1796, noted in his diary that 'after Dinner [I] went to the Cathedral and heard part of the Service, which was slovenly chaunted & wretchedly hurried, more than in any Place I ever was at'.<sup>53</sup> It is only fair to say that his view was not shared by John Marsh, however, who visited the city only a month after Grey. Marsh considered himself fortunate to have arrived at the right time for the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy. A minor canon of the Cathedral told him that 'there wo'd be 3 anthems & the service performed in the very best manner, with a full choir, which he found to be the case'.<sup>54</sup> On his arrival in York two days later, Marsh also heard the Minster choir – 'tho' I thought the singers by no means so good as those at Durham'.<sup>55</sup>

Any deficiency in the choir may have stemmed from a number of causes, not least the fact that some of the most distinguished singers were ageing; William Evance,

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<sup>51</sup> CA DAB 20 July 1791.

<sup>52</sup> NA 13 August 1791.

<sup>53</sup> YRO T2a. Diary of Jonathan Grey, 11 August 1796.

<sup>54</sup> Marsh, *Journals*, p. 623.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 624. Marsh was unlucky on this trip; he was unable to talk to Thomas Ebdon and found John Donaldson out.

for instance, had entered the choir almost thirty years earlier, and George Ashton and Thomas Robinson only a few years later.<sup>56</sup> In addition, the Dean and Chapter were again finding attendance at services increasingly erratic; although this had been a common complaint at the beginning of the century, the problem had not raised its head since 1755. In July 1796, a month before Grey's visit, the singing men were reprimanded by the Chapter for absences:

Ordered that the Precentor do signify to the Singing Men, that it is expected that they be more regular in Chanting the Psalms and in making the Responses and that they are in their Places in the Cathedral before the Service begins. Also that they do not fail to Attend at the Sacrament on the first Sunday of each Month.<sup>57</sup>

Marsh may have been lucky in attending such a major event as the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy with its 'imense conclave of clergy' attending the Bishop;<sup>58</sup> it is likely that all the singing men would make an effort to turn out for such an important occasion. Grey attended a regular service for which the singing men may not have been as conscientious. No improvement in attendance took place and four months later, in November 1796, the Dean and Chapter were moved to more desperate measures, offering the singing men an extra shilling if they attended both morning and evening services on Sundays. One of the senior singing men, Thomas Acton, was appointed to make a list of those attending; the list was presented to a prebendary every Saturday evening for signature before payment of the bonus was authorised.<sup>59</sup>

These measures followed the appointment of a number of unsatisfactory singing men. Some long-standing members of the choir – Evance, Robinson, Ashton, Acton and Friend – served throughout this period with exemplary records, but others were more problematic. Charles Stanley (appointed in 1791) and James Radcliffe (appointed 1795)

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<sup>56</sup> George Ashton was sworn in 1771 [CA DAB 20 November 1775]. Thomas Robinson was sworn in 1775 [ibid., 20 November 1775]. Ashton first came to the adult choir as a supernumerary and was not admitted a full singing man until 1775 [idem].

<sup>57</sup> CA DAB 20 July 1796.

<sup>58</sup> Marsh, *Journals*, p. 623.

<sup>59</sup> CA DAB 20 November 1796.

both turned out to be financially incompetent, with consequences for the smooth running and good reputation of the choir.<sup>60</sup> Stanley asked for advances on his salary from at least 1793, and in July 1795 was briefly suspended from the choir (the exact reason is not stated) before being reinstated.<sup>61</sup> Radcliffe asked for an advance on his annual salary of £50 only six months after his arrival – he had already borrowed five guineas from the Treasurer of the Cathedral.<sup>62</sup> He asked again five months later, in July 1796, and shortly afterwards held his benefit concert;<sup>63</sup> by March the following year, he was in severe difficulties and asked for an advance of no less than £40, the amount to be deducted from his salary over the next few quarters.<sup>64</sup> This would have left him almost penniless and four months later the Dean and Chapter were acknowledging the impossibility of retrieving the money;<sup>65</sup> a few months after that, in October 1797, they were lending him more.<sup>66</sup> Radcliffe's finances continued to deteriorate and he began to neglect his duties; in late 1799, he was considered for dismissal because of non-attendance, but was given a further chance to redeem himself.<sup>67</sup>

The Dean and Chapter were taxed even further by the case of Robert Marlor (sometimes spelt Marlow).<sup>68</sup> Marlor was appointed in July 1776 with a yearly salary of £40;<sup>69</sup> within three years he was in financial difficulties, asking for an advance on his salary in September 1779.<sup>70</sup> In April 1782, he was 'Admonished on Acc<sup>t</sup> of his Drunkenness and general Misbehaviour';<sup>71</sup> the Dean and Chapter chose to appeal to his

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<sup>60</sup> CA TA, 1791-2; DAB 20 July 1795.

<sup>61</sup> CA DAB 11 March 1793, 20 July 1795.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 20 July 1795, 27 February 1796.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 20 July 1796.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 18 March 1797.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 20 July 1797.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 7 October 1797.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 28 September 1799.

<sup>68</sup> Act Books indicate that the singing man spelt his name *Marlor*; elsewhere he is frequently called *Marlow*.

<sup>69</sup> CA DAB 20 July 1776.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 25 September 1779.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 27 April 1782.

better nature and offered him an extra £10 per year provided he behaved.<sup>72</sup> Although the Act Books continue to record payments to Marlor of small sums on a fairly regular basis – for instance sixteen shillings in June 1787, one guinea in September 1788<sup>73</sup> – his behaviour seems to have been acceptable until 1791, when the Dean and Chapter stopped his salary for two months ‘on account of his very ill Behaviour in Church’.<sup>74</sup> His behaviour deteriorated rapidly. A year and a half later his salary was withheld again ‘on Account of his very ill Behaviour to D<sup>r</sup> Cooper one of the Prebendaries and very indecent and disorderly conduct in Church’.<sup>75</sup> The Dean and Chapter finally lost patience in April 1795 when Marlor’s behaviour became intolerable.

In consequence of gross and disorderly behaviour at Church in a state of great intoxication by loud Talking and the most shocking Imprecations, by which the Reader was prevented for a considerable time from proceeding in the Service on Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1795, Rob<sup>t</sup> Marlow ... (who was under the Censure of Chapter Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1792 on Account of his very ill Behaviour to D<sup>r</sup> Cooper ... and for very indecent and disorderly conduct in Church) was ordered to Appear in the Chapter Room on the following day; when M<sup>r</sup> Burgess the Prebendary in Residence ... thought it necessary to suspect him from all Attendance in the Choir and all the Emoluments of his Office as Singing Man.<sup>76</sup>

Marlor was dismissed.<sup>77</sup>

### **V: ‘Well known as a musical composer’**

John Garth lived in Saddler Street, Durham, until at least 1780, paying his land tax and poor tax on a regular and prompt basis,<sup>78</sup> and apparently supporting himself with his teaching activities. In 1793, he received a payment of £10 as one year’s salary for acting

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<sup>72</sup> CA DAB 20 November 1783.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 16 June 1787, 6 September 1788.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 28 May 1791.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 1 December 1792.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 11 April 1795.

<sup>77</sup> Idem.

<sup>78</sup> DRO Du 1/42/11 Durham Corporation Mayors’ accounts, receipts, passim.

as the Bishop of Durham's organist at Auckland Castle<sup>79</sup> and this was possibly a long-term appointment. By this time, he may have moved from Durham and was probably living on family property in or near the village of Wolsingham. Darlington parish registers describe him as 'of the Parish of Wolsingham' when on 20 July 1794, at the age of 63, he unexpectedly married, apparently for the first time. His bride was Anne, or Nanny, Wrightson, an heiress nearly thirty years his junior. The couple settled at her home at Cockerton, just south of Darlington, where Garth spent the last years of his life administering his wife's inheritance. At his death, sixteen years later, his will revealed him to be a wealthy man, owning property in at least six parishes over a wide area of County Durham, and at Witton-le-Wear where he had been born eighty eight years before. He was buried in the north aisle of St. Cuthbert's church in Darlington in March 1810; a notice in the *Monthly Magazine* simply remarked that he was 'well-known as a musical composer'.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> CA Auckland Receiver General's accounts, Financial and audit 1659-1856, Box 36.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in R. Scarr, 'Georgian musician who lived at Cockerton,' *Darlington and Stockton Times*, 25 June 1960.

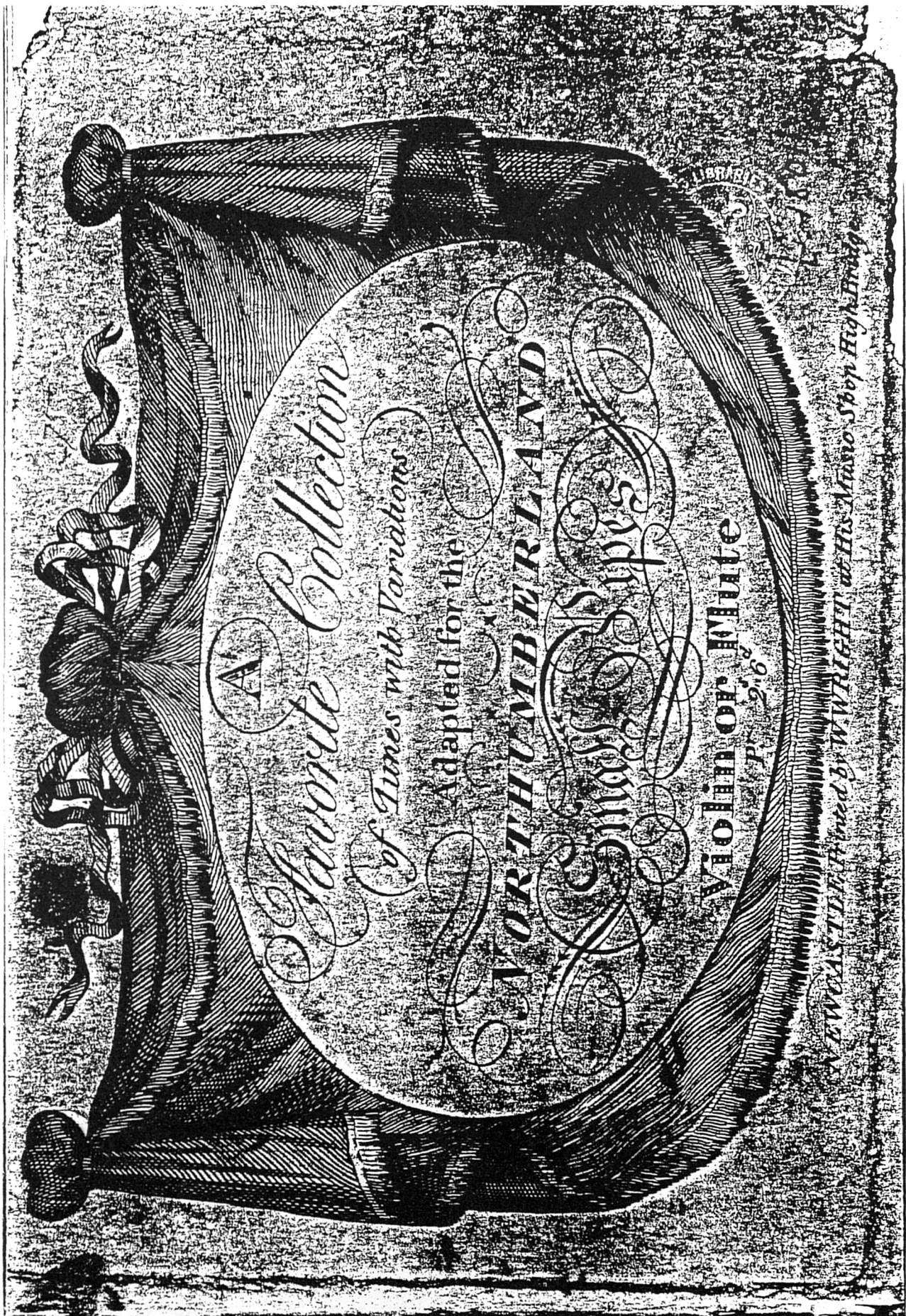


Plate 25: Title page of John Peacock's collection of tunes for the Northumberland small pipes, edited by Thomas Wright and published by his brother in Newcastle, 1801.



# 15

## REVIVAL: NEWCASTLE 1789-95

### I: Attempts at subscription series, 1789-94

On the death of Matthias Hawdon in 1789, Charles Avison jnr. was elected to the post of organist of St. Nicholas's,<sup>1</sup> increasing his salary from £20 to £50 per annum – no doubt welcome to a man with a young and growing family (three children under the age of five).<sup>2</sup> He did not formally resign his position as organist of All Saints until six months later; when he did, the post was taken by Thomas Hawdon. Hawdon immediately advertised for pupils wishing to learn organ, harpsichord and piano forte; he took care to avoid his father's error and charged the usual rate of one guinea and a half per quarter with one guinea 'entrance' fee; pupils of his father were offered reduced rates.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *NA* 28 March 1789.

<sup>2</sup> *TAWS CAN* passim.

<sup>3</sup> *NCh* 17 October 1789.

In late 1789, Avison and Hawdon together decided to revive the winter subscription series. No series had been held for five years, since Ebdon and Meredith's attempt of 1785. Avison and Hawdon's plans were not ambitious. They put on a series in the truncated form that had become familiar in Hawdon's last years: three concerts, held in the early months of 1790 (on 26 January, 2 March and 6 April),<sup>4</sup> for a subscription of half a guinea or an astonishingly high 4s. per night.<sup>5</sup> But the link with Durham, so strong in Hawdon's time, had been severely weakened. The only Durham musician at Avison and Hawdon's concerts was Meredith's replacement, John Reynolds. The band was led by Thomas Wright, who also played clarinet concertos in each concert.<sup>6</sup> The old Cathedral band, with Robinson as leader and Ashton as principal cellist, was henceforward confined to concerts in Durham; their dominance of Newcastle's musical activities had ended.

Only one other concert was held in Newcastle in the early part of the year – a benefit for Mr. Byles, the box-keeper at the Theatre in Newcastle. Byles would generally have been granted a theatrical performance, but was, he claimed, given too short notice and put on a concert instead, utilising performers connected with the theatre – various actors and actresses to sing and give recitations, and Thomas Wright to lead the band. At the concert, one of Thomas Hawdon's first pupils made his first known appearance in public; Thomas Thompson, the only son of John Thompson the wait and breeches maker, was thirteen years old and already an accomplished piano forte player.<sup>7</sup>

Thomas Wright was prospering at this time. He appeared regularly in concerts throughout the region as a clarinettist, was leader of Ebdon's Sunderland subscription series and a regular performer in Durham. His activities in the theatre took up a large

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<sup>4</sup> *NA* 16 January, 27 February, 27 March 1790.

<sup>5</sup> Between the second and third concerts Hawdon suffered the death of his eighteen-year-old wife, daughter of the vicar of Holy Trinity Hull [*NC* 20 March 1790].

<sup>6</sup> *NA* 16 January 1790.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 March 1790.

portion of his time.<sup>8</sup> He also composed a substantial number of works, chiefly small-scale items for the theatre and clarinet concertos for his own performance. A reviewer in the *Newcastle Advertiser* in March 1791 noted one of these latter with approval, writing that ‘Mr. Wright of this town, whose abilities on the clarinet are well known, never displayed greater taste and execution, than in the pleasing simple Scotch air which terminated his concerto’.<sup>9</sup> In addition he was teaching, apparently acquiring his pupils by word of mouth – throughout his career in Newcastle, he never advertised anything more than brief details of his concerts. In October 1790, he took on yet another job, as organist of St. Andrew’s Church after the death of the previous organist.<sup>10</sup> This brought an addition to his income of £20 per annum, paid by the City Corporation.<sup>11</sup>

A benefit for Wright in March 1791 was almost certainly held in his capacity as leader of the subscription series. Wright went to some lengths to make this concert memorable:

From the Number, and careful selection of his Band, Mr. Wright promises himself the pleasure of presenting the Ladies and Gentlemen with a Concert not inferior, if not superior, to any they have heard in Newcastle for some years.<sup>12</sup>

He promised that ‘the Band will consist of 50 performers, vocal and instrumental’, and took advantage of the number of performers to begin each act with an overture for double orchestra by Bach;<sup>13</sup> the only other known occasion on which similar works by Bach were performed in the area was at a benefit in York in 1780 – a benefit at which Wright had played. For vocal soloists, Wright hired his old friends from Durham, William Evance and John Friend. The concert was longer than was customary; its two

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<sup>8</sup> Although the company was still peripatetic, spending only five months of the year at Newcastle, Wright did not move with them.

<sup>9</sup> *NA* 5 March 1791. It is generally impossible to identify these concerts individually; most are referred to merely as ‘a new concerto’. (See Appendix 3).

<sup>10</sup> George Barron died in 1787 [*NJ* 2 June 1787] and was succeeded by a blind local youth, George Carr. Carr also died young, at his uncle’s house in Berwick in 1790 [*NA* 25 August 1790].

<sup>11</sup> *TAWS* 543, *CAN*, passim.

<sup>12</sup> *NC* 19 March 1791.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*. These works cannot be precisely identified.

acts consisted of six and eight items respectively. Wright played a clarinet concerto in each half, one of his own composition, the other by John Mahon, and offered a selection of music by contemporary composers such as Sacchini, Webbe, Vanhal, Ebdon and Arne.<sup>14</sup> (Ex. 15.1) The *Newcastle Courant* published a highly favourable review, remarking on the ‘strength and accuracy of the performance’ and on the evidently much appreciated assistance given by Gentlemen amateurs.<sup>15</sup>

**Ex. 15.1: Benefit for Thomas Wright, 22 March 1791<sup>16</sup>**

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	Composer
ACT 1	
Grand Overture, double orchestra	Bach
Cantata, ‘Ambition with thy toilsome state’	Sacchini
Clarinet concerto	Wright
Song, ‘Fain would I weave a garland fair’	Webbe
Cello solo	Claget
Song and Chorus, ‘Thou shall break them with a rod of iron’, Hallelujah’	Handel
ACT 2	
Grand Overture, double orchestra	Bach
Song, ‘The last time I came o’er the moor’	
Quartet	Vanhal
Duet, Violin and Cello	Wright
Song, three voices, ‘Come shepherds, we’ll follow the hearse’	Ebdon
Clarinet concerto	Mahon
Song, ‘The soldier tir’d of war’s alarms’	Arne
Coronation Anthem, <i>Zadok the Priest</i>	Handel

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Wright’s benefit was also notable for the return to Newcastle, after a thirty year absence, of Walter Claget. Since his brief stay in the city in company with his brother in 1759 and 1760, Claget had been much involved in the theatre world and he described himself in advertisements as ‘from the Theatre-Royal in London’.<sup>17</sup> He was working at Newcastle’s theatre at the time of Wright’s benefit and had possibly been in the city for

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<sup>14</sup> CL Handbill (Newcastle) 22 March 1791.

<sup>15</sup> NC 26 March 1791.

<sup>16</sup> CL Handbill (Newcastle), 22 March 1791.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 2 April 1791.

around a year – his son William had been buried at St. Andrew’s in March 1790.<sup>18</sup> In Wright’s benefit, he played a solo of his own composing on the cello, and a duet for violin and cello with Wright on violin.<sup>19</sup> A fortnight later, he held his own benefit advertising that:

Mr. Clagget having but little acquaintance in Newcastle, has declined taking a benefit at the Theatre, on account of the great expence, and humbly hopes for the patronage of the Ladies and Gentlemen in his present design.<sup>20</sup>

A full programme for the concert does not survive, but it apparently bore a close resemblance to Wright’s benefit; Wright led, and played two clarinet concertos and a violin and cello duet with Claget. Claget played cello solos and young Thomas Thompson played a piano forte lesson. Vocal parts were taken by actors and actresses from the theatre company.<sup>21</sup>

Despite reviving the subscription series, Charles Avison appears to have made no effort to hold Assize Concerts in 1789 and 1790, and in 1791 the concert may have been set aside in favour of a more prestigious event. In late August, the *Newcastle Courant* began to be enthusiastic about the prospect of a full-scale Musical Festival. The *Courant* had carried a report of the York Musical Festival (a fortnight earlier) which was excessive in its delight.

This Musical festival is certainly the most complete of its kind ever undertaken out of London. – The Cathedral is better adapted to produce a sublime effect than any other place in the Kingdom. – Madame Mara has called forth the most wonderful and delightful powers, which have far surpassed every thing we ever heard before.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Burial registers of St. Andrew’s Church, Newcastle, 1 March 1790.

<sup>19</sup> CL Handbill (Newcastle), 22 March 1791.

<sup>20</sup> NC 2 April 1791. If Claget had been resident in the city for a year, his lack of acquaintance is a little odd; it is possible that he had been travelling with the theatre company.

<sup>21</sup> Idem.

<sup>22</sup> NC 20 August 1791. See Chapter 13.

The festival proposed in Newcastle was identical to York's; John Ashley, having collaborated with Matthew Camidge at the Minster, was moving north. His collaborator in Newcastle was not Charles Avison jnr. (who is never mentioned in advertisements) but Edward Meredith; the *Courant* commented that

Mr. Meredith, the worthy Bass singer, is determined to entertain us, in a high style, at our Musical Festival ... and with an excellent Band of Instrumental performers and Chorus singers, there can be no doubt that he will meet with every encouragement ... so great an undertaking deserves.<sup>23</sup>

Meredith's participation was no doubt emphasised to trade on his popularity in the area.

The Festival was held over the weekend of 25-30 August with Selections of Sacred Music in St. Nicholas's Church on Thursday and Saturday mornings, and two miscellaneous concerts on the following Monday and Tuesday nights at the theatre.<sup>24</sup> *Messiah* was performed on Friday morning. (Table 15.1) Assemblies were also held during the Festival.<sup>25</sup>

**Table 15.1: Music Festival, Newcastle 25-30 August 1791<sup>26</sup>**

Thursday	25 August	St. Nicholas (am)	Grand selection of Sacred Music
Friday	26 August	St. Nicholas (am)	<i>Messiah</i>
Saturday	27 August	St. Nicholas (am)	Grand selection of Sacred Music
Monday	29 August	Theatre (pm)	Grand Miscellaneous concert
Tuesday	30 August	Theatre (pm)	Grand Miscellaneous concert

The opening concert on Thursday morning was attended by 'an elegant and numerous company' who were appropriately struck by the abilities of Madame Mara,<sup>27</sup> and the *Newcastle Chronicle* estimated that a thousand people attended the performance of *Messiah* on Friday morning,<sup>28</sup> although this figure is at odds with the *Advertiser's* claim

<sup>23</sup> *NC* 18 June 1791.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 August 1791.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 August 1791.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 August 1791.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>28</sup> *NCh* 3 September 1791.

that a total of 700 people attended the entire festival.<sup>29</sup> The Saturday concert was not so well attended but 'at the theatre on Monday the crowd was so excessive, that it was with the utmost difficulty admission could be gained to any part of the house'. On Tuesday, 'the company was thinner and more agreeably circumstanced'.<sup>30</sup> Extravagant praise was heaped upon the performances and the *Courant* remarked that 'it is needless to observe that the management was well conducted, when we intimate that MEREDITH and ASHLEY were conductors'.<sup>31</sup> The only jarring note was struck by a report that members of Durham Cathedral Choir had been offended by the use of the Lancashire Chapel choirs as chorus singers and had refused to take part in the festival. The *Newcastle Courant* stated:

As a very illiberal report has been circulated, that the Choir of Durham had refused to comply with an application made to them to attend the Newcastle Musical Festival, we are authorised and requested, in order to contradict so injurious a report, to say, that such an application was never made.<sup>32</sup>

Although no subscription series was advertised for the winter of 1791-2, Thomas Wright received a benefit in May 1792 'by Desire of the Committee of the Subscription Concerts',<sup>33</sup> which indicates that the series did continue over the winter. The reference to a Committee suggests that it was no longer entirely in the hands of Charles Avison and Thomas Hawdon, although they may have continued with the musical direction. This was Wright's second benefit of the year; he had held another of his large-scale concerts on 31 January, using Evance and Friend as vocal soloists and Walter Claget as principal cellist. His aim for the May concert was to have 'a Band equal, if not superior,

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<sup>29</sup> *NA* 27 August 1791.

<sup>30</sup> *NCh* 3 September 1791.

<sup>31</sup> *NC* 27 August 1791.

<sup>32</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>33</sup> *NC* 21 April 1792.

to that of last year' and he enlarged the stage considerably for that purpose.<sup>34</sup> This reference to a stage is the only surviving clue to the disposition of bands in the New Assembly Rooms on Westgate Road; it was probably a temporary structure that was removed when the rooms were used for dancing assemblies – the much smaller band used on these latter occasions would have been accommodated in the small gallery built for the purpose.<sup>35</sup>

Wright's advertisement for the January benefit had appealed to his prospective audience's love of novelty, offering at the beginning of each act 'one of those favourite SINFONYS, composed by HAYDN since his arrival in England, and performed, at Salomon's concert'.<sup>36</sup> This appeal to the attractions of fashionable new music was taken up in Wright's advertisement for his May benefit which promised that 'MUSIC entirely New will be procured'. Wright took all major parts in the concert, performing as leader and as vocal and clarinet soloists. The handbill for the concert is preserved and shows an unusual emphasis on one composer – no less than five of the twelve pieces performed were by Pleyel, including two overtures, a violin and cello duet, and a quartet. A symphony by Haydn closed the concert, neatly playing tribute to both sides in the fashionable rivalry between the partisans of Haydn and Pleyel in London.<sup>37</sup> (Appendix 1)

The 1792-3 subscription series was advertised a mere five days before it began on 29 November. Little information was given, beyond the fact that the concerts – in the New Assembly Rooms on Westgate Road – were to be held fortnightly and would begin at seven o'clock 'in order to accommodate Non-residents and Gentlemen of the Navy and Army'.<sup>38</sup> Nightly tickets cost 3s. 6d. The earlier starting date and the fortnightly

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<sup>34</sup> NC 21 January 1792.

<sup>35</sup> See below.

<sup>36</sup> NC 21 January 1792.

<sup>37</sup> CL Handbill (Newcastle), 2 May 1792.

<sup>38</sup> NC 24 November 1792.



incidence of concerts indicates that the series had grown from the short series put on by Avison and Hawdon in 1790 – which in turn suggests that it was at this time well-supported. Individual concerts of the series were not advertised.

In the winter, the city was visited by two nationally known soloists: John Mahon and Alexander Reinagle. The two men were at this time resident in Edinburgh, performing there at the beginning of August.<sup>39</sup> At the end of the month they played in the York Race Week concert,<sup>40</sup> and they were probably on their way back to Edinburgh when they arrived in Newcastle at the beginning of December. They advertised a concert for 4 December, with Mahon playing first violin, a clarinet concerto and a concerto on a new instrument, the Voce Claria; Reinagle played a cello concerto and ‘several other favourite Pieces’.<sup>41</sup> Early in the New Year, they paid a brief visit to Durham for a concert on 4 January. Meanwhile Walter Claget and one of the actors at the theatre, William Ware, held ‘a GRAND CONCERT’ at the Theatre Royal. The concert unashamedly played on the appeal of the novel, offering a ‘DUET on the Violin and Violoncello, with a favourite Air in the SOUNDS HARMONIC, in both Parts’ and, even more bizarrely, ‘GOD SAVE THE KING,’ with Variations, on one Violin, By Messrs. CLAGGET and WARE, both bowing and both fingering throughout the whole Piece’.<sup>42</sup> (Ex. 15.2, p. 303)

When Mahon and Reinagle returned to Newcastle for a second benefit in the middle of January 1792, Reinagle was unexpectedly called away. Mahon hurriedly re-advertised the concert, apologising for Reinagle’s absence and remarking that he had ‘endeavoured to supply his place by engaging the best performers in Durham,’<sup>43</sup> by which he meant ‘the Gentlemen of Durham Choir’ and in particular John Friend. He

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<sup>39</sup> *EC* 2 August 1792.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 13.

<sup>41</sup> *NC* 24 November 1792.

<sup>42</sup> *NCh* 22 December 1792.

<sup>43</sup> *NC* 12 January 1793.

### Ex. 15.3: Benefit for Ware and Claget, 8 January 1793

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	Composer	Performer
ACT 1		
Symphony	Pleyel	
Song		Mrs. Ware
Cello solo		Walter Claget
Song		Mrs. Edwin
Violin concerto		Mr. Ware
Between the Acts:		
<i>Ode to the Passions</i>		recited by Mr. Kemble
ACT 2		
'God save the King', with variations on one violin		Ware and Claget
Piano forte sonata		Thomas Thompson
Song		Mr. Davis
Duet, violin and cello, 'with a favourite Air in the Sounds Harmonic'		Ware and Claget
Song, 'Oh Nanny wilt you gang wi'me!'		Mrs. Kemble
Clarinet concerto		Thomas Wright
Coronation Anthem [ <i>Zadok the Priest</i> ]	[Handel]	

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also enlisted the aid of Thomas Wright who, as Mahon performed a clarinet solo, concentrated on playing stringed instruments and on singing; he sang 'Sweet Echo' to Mahon's accompaniment, joined Mahon in a duet for violin and viola (in which he played the latter) and played clarinet in a conversation piece for Voce Claria, clarinet and cello. This last was of Wright's composition or possibly, given that he was enlisted to participate in the concert at short notice, arranged from other pieces. The concert ended, as many concerts did at this time (in view of deteriorating relations with revolutionary France) with 'the Grand Chorus of 'GOD SAVE THE KING' in all its parts, set by HANDEL'.<sup>44</sup> (Appendix 1)

The patriotic note was also struck by Wright in a benefit he held in April of the same year – this may have been a benefit from the subscription series or one of Wright's own promotions. The programme included Wright's usual clarinet concerto and he also played a violin concerto by Jarnovic (Giornovich) – the only time he is known to have

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<sup>44</sup> NC 12 January 1793.

played a solo violin work. Thomas Thompson, by now a regular performer in the city's concerts, played a piano forte sonata by Pleyel. But pride of place went to 'that celebrated piece of imitative Music, called THE BATTLE for PRAGUE, adapted for a full Band'. Wright augmented the orchestra for this piece with drums, bugle horn and trumpets, possibly called in from a regiment quartered locally.<sup>45</sup>

As Wright became more and more active in concert-promotion and performance in Newcastle, Charles Avison, perhaps the more natural promoter as the organist of St. Nicholas's, was correspondingly withdrawing from concert life. Although he held (for apparently the first time) an Assize Concert in late July 1793 with Evance, Friend and Wright as principal soloists, he was no longer associated with the subscription series as a musical director; his former collaborator, Thomas Hawdon, died in November 1793 at the age of only 28.<sup>46</sup> The subscription series had in fact hit another low and the Committee that had organised it in the past two or three years had also withdrawn. Some demand for a series did remain, however, and in early December Thomas Wright inserted an advertisement in the *Newcastle Courant*:

MR. WRIGHT, ORGANIST OF ST. ANDREWS, respectfully informs the Ladies and Gentlemen of Newcastle and its Vicinity, that he has been solicited by some of his Friends to undertake the management of Winter Concerts, which he is ready to do as soon as a Subscription can be raised to defray the attendance expences.<sup>47</sup>

The result of the advertisement was a series of seven concerts run at fortnightly intervals between January and April 1794; the cost of subscription is not preserved – nightly tickets cost 3s. 6d. as was normal for all local concerts by this time. Details of repertoire survive about only the last concert, which took place on 1 April. (Appendix 1) The patriotic element was again strong with the inclusion of *The Battle of Prague* and 'Two

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<sup>45</sup> NC 27 April 1793.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 30 November 1793.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 7 December 1793.

Grand MILITARY PIECES of various Movements performed by FIVE CLARINETS, FOUR HORNS, THREE BASSOONS, A SERPENT, A DOUBLE BASS and TWO KETTLE DRUMS'.<sup>48</sup> Other performers included the band of the West York Militia stationed at Tynemouth, and Thomas Thompson.<sup>49</sup> Thompson had followed the example of many local musicians before him and travelled to London for instruction, in his case with the celebrated pianist Clementi;<sup>50</sup> on his return he had been appointed organist at All Saints Church in succession to his old teacher Thomas Hawdon. He was only seventeen years old,<sup>51</sup> but his youth and relative inexperience did not prevent him setting up as a teacher of harpsichord and piano forte,<sup>52</sup> and putting on a benefit concert for himself in October 1794.<sup>53</sup> He had friends in high places and the concert included a number of his own songs, several piano forte sonatas by Dussek and others, and a clarinet concerto by Wright who, as ever, led the band. Like Wright, Thompson included much military music in the concert and the West York Militia band to perform it. Also appearing in the concert (and in Wright's before it) was another young up-and-coming musician, Alexander Munro Kinlock. Kinlock was the son of a dancing master and had performed in the theatre on a number of occasions, dancing minuets and jigs between the acts of plays.<sup>54</sup> He appeared in Wright and Thompson's benefits as principal cellist, a role he performed in most Newcastle concerts in the 1790s.<sup>55</sup>

Wright's subscription series was not repeated in the 1794-5 season; in the absence of advertisements, it is probable that no series was held. Wright did not hold any concert in 1795 that could be interpreted as a subscription series benefit, busying

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<sup>48</sup> NC 29 March 1794.

<sup>49</sup> Idem.

<sup>50</sup> NC 8 February 1794.

<sup>51</sup> Idem.

<sup>52</sup> Idem.

<sup>53</sup> NC 27 September 1794.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 19 April 1788. Kinlock's father, Adam, had come to the city from London in around 1780 [NC 4 March 1780].

<sup>55</sup> e.g. NC 27 July 1793.

himself in the early part of the year in the theatre and at Sunderland, where he was now leader of Weyllandt's subscription series.<sup>56</sup> In March 1795, Charles Avison, the only other musician with experience of mounting a subscription series, died after a long illness,<sup>57</sup> which may have curtailed his activities for several years. His last known concert had been an Assize Week concert of the summer of 1794 that had followed much the same pattern as Wright's and Thompson's benefits; Wright, Kinlock and the West York Militia band lent a military flavour to the evening.<sup>58</sup> Avison left a young son of the same name and a bitter controversy between his creditors and his wife over his will; the son died young and seems to have played no part in public music-making.<sup>59</sup> The long connection of Newcastle's musical life with the Avison family was over.

## II: Domestic music-making and music sellers

Since Robert Barber's departure in 1773,<sup>60</sup> no specialist music shop had existed in Newcastle. The principal source of musical instruments was almost always a professional musician, many of whom bought and sold instruments, either direct from the makers in London or from pupils or local amateurs second-hand. Advertisements for concerts or for teaching purposes frequently carried riders concerning instruments for sale, as did this advertisement of Thomas Thompson's in 1794:

Mr. THOMPSON, junior, feels himself so deeply impressed with a sense of gratitude to ... those LADIES and GENTLEMEN who honoured him by their Appearance at his CONCERT ... that he should think himself wanting in duty, if he withheld this public Acknowledgement of it.  
N.B. He has just got from London, several NEW PIANO FORTES, to dispose of.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>56</sup> NC 10 January, 7 February 1795, 14 February 1795 et al.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 11 April 1795.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 16 August 1794.

<sup>59</sup> Monumental inscription, St. Andrew's Churchyard. Charles Avison's son, also Charles, died 19 February, 1816, aged twenty five.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 8.

<sup>61</sup> NC 11 October 1794.

For smaller instruments and musical accessories such as strings, bridges and reeds, it was still necessary to visit stationers such as Edward Humble ‘Stationer, Book and Printseller, at Pope’s Head, foot of the Side, Newcastle’ (‘New Music, Books, &c. ordered with expedition’)<sup>62</sup> or Vesey and Whitefield (‘Booksellers, Stationers, Printseller, Dealers in Music, Musical Instruments, &c’).<sup>63</sup> The most prominent of these sellers were Barber’s (still active at Amen Corner behind St. Nicholas Church but now under the direction of Robert Barber’s younger brother Joseph) and John Hawthorn’s, on the Side just below St. Nicholas’s Church. Hawthorn was a clockmaker and traded in Newcastle from 1756 until his death in 1778. His advertisements, which varied little through the decades, are typical of those appearing in local newspapers:

JOHN HAWTHORN, CLOCK and WATCHMAKER, *At the DIAL, in the HEAD of the SIDE*, Newcastle, MAKES, mends, and sells all Sorts of CLOCKS and WATCHES; ...

Where may be had, Music and Musical Instruments, viz. Violins, Cases and Bows for D<sup>o</sup>, Hautboys, German Flutes of all Sorts, Fifes, Flageolets, Tabor and Pipes, Æolian Harps, Mock Trumpets, Pitch-pipes, French Horns, Reeds for Hautboys and Bassoons, Wire for Harpsichords, Hammers for D<sup>o</sup>, Mutes for Violins and Basses, Bridges, Pins and Nuts for D<sup>o</sup>, Music Stands, Reed Cases, rul’d Books, rul’d Paper, Mouth-Pieces for French Horns, &c. Also Books of Instruction for the above Instruments, Country Dances, Hornpipes, Minuets, a great Quantity of Music, and Songs set to Music, with great Choice of the best Roman Fiddle Strings. – Likewise Toulman’s Silver Spurs for Cocks.<sup>64</sup>

Barber, Hawthorn and a number of other sellers obtained some stock directly from London; John Hawthorn, for instance, offered ‘a Number of the best GUITTARS from London ... all made by Mr. FREDERICK HINTZ, GUITAR-MAKER to her Majesty and the Pest of the Royal Family’.<sup>65</sup> Other instruments were obtained from wholesalers such as John Pillemont who came to the city at least once (in 1768)<sup>66</sup> and

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<sup>62</sup> NC 22 June 1776.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 7 June 1777. Thomas Ebdon also obtained double-bass strings from the engraver, Thomas Bewick [TAWS 1269/11 Bewick’s Accounts, Day Book, 24 December 1775].

<sup>64</sup> NJ 20-27 November 1756.

<sup>65</sup> NC 7 January 1772.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter 8 for Pillemont’s visits to York.

another, unnamed, visitor in 1774 for whom musical instruments were merely one commodity amongst many:

MUSIC, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, and LOOKING GLASSES. Just ARRIVED from LONDON, ... A Large Assortment of NEW MUSIC, ten per cent under the printed prices.

A Large Assortment of Harpsicords, Piano Fortes, Spinnets, Barrel Organs, Flutes and Violins, Tuning Hammers and Forks, Fiddle Strings and Harpsicord Wire. Likewise, an elegant Assortment of carved and gilt, oval and square, Pier Glasses and Girandoles; a great Variety of japanned and Mahogany Dressing Glasses. – About 700 yards of Stringing for inlaying, fit for Cabinet Makers, and several other Articles.<sup>67</sup>

This merchant also sold both to private individuals and to trade, remarking that ‘very good allowance will be made to those who buy to sell again’.<sup>68</sup>

Specialist music-shops did not appear in the city again until the early 1790s. They then seem to have flourished – three shops were set up within a short period suggesting an increase of demand that cannot be explained by the needs of the professional musical community which remained small; this in turn suggests an increase in demand by amateur players for domestic music-making. The first shop was set up by Robert Sutherland, organist of Gateshead. Sutherland was appointed to the Gateshead post early in 1792 in succession to Edward Edmund Ayrton, son of the organist of Ripon Cathedral and a former chorister at the Chapel Royal.<sup>69</sup> Ayrton had clearly regarded the Gateshead post merely as a stepping stone and stayed only four years before moving on to Swansea;<sup>70</sup> Sutherland was probably a local man and held the post until well into the next century. Like all musicians in the area he had a number of

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<sup>67</sup> NC 22 October 1774.

<sup>68</sup> Idem.

<sup>69</sup> NC 7 January 1792.

<sup>70</sup> Idem. Ayrton had a distinctly scandalous past and may have been sent to Gateshead by his family in an attempt to avoid a hasty and unwise marriage. His later career at Swansea was also chequered and he died young in unhappy circumstances in Bolton. See John Hugh Thomas, ‘Edward Edmund Ayrton, The Swansea Ayrton’, *Morganwg, The Journal of Glamorgan History*, Vol. XXXIX, 1995, pp. 30-49.

sources of income; he taught regularly and two months after his appointment advertised himself as a tuner:

As it will answer better to the Public, for one person to give particular attention to the business of Tuning, Mr. Sutherland, Organist of Gateshead (with the approbation of Messrs. Avison and Wright, Organists in Newcastle) now offers himself as a general Tuner for this part of the Country.<sup>71</sup>

Sutherland also dealt in musical instruments in the limited way of most professional teachers, tagging on to the end of his advertisements notices for new and second-hand goods.<sup>72</sup> In September 1792, however, he expanded his activities in this area:

R. SUTHERLAND ... Having removed to No. 1 on the north side of GATESHEAD CHURCH, respectfully acquaints the LOVERS of MUSIC, that shortly will be opened (adjoining Mr. Wilson's Auctioneer, St. John's Lane) a compleat WARE ROOM for all sorts of MUSIC and MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS from the very first MAKERS.<sup>73</sup>

He offered piano fortes 'made by the celebrated Mr. GARCIA, the latest Patentee for improving Piano Fortes' and advertised second-hand instruments 'bought, exchanged or put into the best order ... their mechanism will admit of particularly Violins and Basses, which have been neglected'. This 'Ware Room' was almost certainly not open continuously but only at the convenience of Sutherland and his prospective customers; Sutherland requested that enquiries about instruments should be directed to the auctioneer next door, or to a bookseller in Newcastle.<sup>74</sup>

Sutherland's venture was without competitors until 1795 when the opening of two more music shops in quick succession suggests that the market was still expanding. The first competitor was William Wright, younger brother of Thomas, who in December 1795 advertised that he had opened a shop 'in the HIGH-BRIDGE, where [LADIES and GENTLEMEN] may be supplied with every Article in the Musical Line on the most

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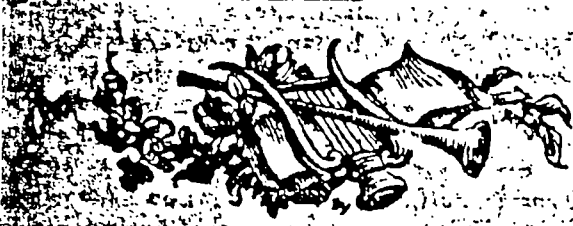
<sup>71</sup> NC 31 March 1792.

<sup>72</sup> Idem.

<sup>73</sup> NC 22 September 1792.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 22 September 1792.





**WILLIAM WRIGHT,**  
**MUSIC-SELLER, HIGH-BRIDGE, NEWCASTLE,**  
**B**EGS Leave to return his most grateful Ac-  
 knowledgments to his Friends and the Public at  
 large, for the many Favours he has received since he  
 commenced Business; and takes this Opportunity of  
 informing them, that he has just received from Lon-  
 don, a large Assortment of INSTRUMENTS, and  
 NEW MUSICAL PUBLICATIONS, which he will  
 vend on the lowest Terms.—He wishes to recommend  
 to the Notice of the Public, the new-invented BAR-  
 REL ORGAN, with the Addition of Drum and  
 Triangles, which is particularly calculated for Coun-  
 try Dances, having the Effect of a Band of Instruments.  
 He has got in a considerable Quantity of REAL  
 ROMAN STRINGS, of which there has been a  
 great Scarcity in this Country for some Time past.

Plate 26: Advertisement for William Wright's Music Shop, Newcastle, 1799 [NC 13 April 1799].

reasonable Terms'.<sup>75</sup> Wright also offered a repair service and may have had connections with a violin maker, William Christie, who also lived on High Bridge.<sup>76</sup> As in Sutherland's case, the shop did not represent Wright's sole source of income: a directory of 1790 lists him as a music teacher;<sup>77</sup> he had been a wait until the abolition of the office in 1793 and played in a number of bands in the city.<sup>78</sup>

Six months after the setting up of Wright's business, John Thompson also opened a music shop. Thompson had sold a selection of musical goods from his breeches shop since his arrival in the city in the late 1770s; in June 1796, he expanded his stock and established new premises for it:

J. THOMPSON respectfully informs the Ladies and Gentlemen of Newcastle and the Country in general, that he has opened a Shop, at the Head of the Side, for Music and Musical Instruments, where they may be served with every Article on the lowest terms, from the first Houses in London.<sup>79</sup>

Thompson's emphasis on his ability to obtain high-quality goods from London was echoed by William Wright:

As he corresponds with the first Dealers in London, and pays the best Prices for his Goods, his Friends may be assured of being accommodated at all Times, with the most perfect Instruments ... Every new Musical Publication procured in the space of a few days.<sup>80</sup>

It is not clear how this insistence upon the quality and desirability of London goods affected local instrument-making. Most local instrument-makers seem also to have had other sources of income: Matthew Prior was a turner and assay-master;<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *NC* 5 December 1795.

<sup>76</sup> *NA* 9 February 1799.

<sup>77</sup> *TAWS* Whitehead's Newcastle and Gateshead Directory 1790.

<sup>78</sup> See below. No reason is given for the abolition of the office of wait; it is possible that the Corporation wished to save money. At about the same time they reduced Charles Avison's salary at St. Nicholas's Church [*TAWS* 543/148, Chamberlain's Accounts, Midsummer 1794].

<sup>79</sup> *NCh* 4 June 1796.

<sup>80</sup> *NC* 4 February 1797.

<sup>81</sup> See Chapter 9.

Edward Humble was also a stationer.<sup>82</sup> Whitehead's directory of 1790 also lists Whitehead's own son, William, as a musical-instrument maker although nothing else is known of him.<sup>83</sup> Whitehead snr. was a well-known dabbler in many things; both he and Robert Sutherland claimed to have invented a swell pedal for the piano forte – it is not known whether working versions of either man's inventions were built or sold.<sup>84</sup> William Christie, the violin maker of High Bridge, is known only from a report of a fire that ravaged the house in 1799 destroying 'almost everything therein, consisting of fiddles, band-boxes, &c'.<sup>85</sup> A second violin maker – described as 'a noted Fiddle-maker' – fought an impromptu duel with a local plumber in 1774.<sup>86</sup> The level and scope of the activities of these manufacturers is impossible to ascertain but it is likely that their productions made up a large part of the less expensive goods sold by Wright, Thompson and Sutherland, with London goods forming the most expensive part of their merchandise.

Sutherland may have found that competition from Wright and Thompson took away some of his trade; in August 1798, he moved his shop to Newcastle itself where he set up a 'MUSIC-SHOP and WAREHOUSE' on Pilgrim Street. He was clearly by this time employing a number of men; his advertisement states that 'all Orders will be punctually observed, and instruments repaired by the best Workmen here'.<sup>87</sup> For two years, therefore, three music shops traded within a small area of the city and the competition may have proved too much for John Thompson, who closed his shop at the turn of the century, selling all his stock to William Wright.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *NA* 16 May 1789, 14 November 1795.

<sup>83</sup> Whitehead, *Directory*, 1790.

<sup>84</sup> *NJ* 18 February 1775 (Whitehead); *NCh* 9 August 1794 (Sutherland).

<sup>85</sup> *NA* 9 February 1799.

<sup>86</sup> *NJ* 27 August-3 September 1774.

<sup>87</sup> *NC* 4 August 1798.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 May 1800. William later expanded into Sunderland [*NC* 16 February 1802].

### III: Musical composition and publishing

Almost all the musicians active in the city in the 1790s composed music, often in staggering quantities. Thomas Wright alone is known to have written 69 pieces between 1780 and 1800, ranging in size from a ballad opera and a pantomime, to individual songs and short marches for military band.<sup>89</sup> This total is certainly an underestimate, as it is impossible to identify individual clarinet concertos with any certainty. 46 songs by Thomas Thompson are also known, and 36 have survived with both words and music; these were written in the period between 1790 and his death in 1830. Thompson also wrote *A Dictionary of Music containing an Explanation of the French, Italian and other Words, &c. made use of in that Science* (published in 1801),<sup>90</sup> and a considerable number of shorter piano pieces with a patriotic air, including such tunes as *Rule Britannia* and *God save the King*.<sup>91</sup> Dancing masters were also active composers, producing books of short tunes for use in their work or for playing at home when a little impromptu after-dinner entertainment was wanted. Abraham Mackintosh, a dancing master who came to the city around 1798, produced a book of tunes in 1801 with some tunes – *Miss Rickaby's Reel*, for instance – diplomatically named after pupils.<sup>92</sup> One of these books of tunes is the only piece of composition from this period in Newcastle that is still in print – John Peacock, a former wait and well-known player of the Northumbrian pipes, produced in 1801 *A favourite Collection of tunes with variations adapted for the Northumbrian pipes, violin or flute*.<sup>93</sup> Many of the tunes were traditional; some were written or arranged by Peacock himself. He was however apparently unable to read or write music and enlisted the help of Thomas Wright as

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<sup>89</sup> See Appendix 3.

<sup>90</sup> Published by William Wright, Newcastle, 1801.

<sup>91</sup> NC 20 February 1796.

<sup>92</sup> Abraham Mackintosh, *A Collection of Strathspeys, Reels, Jigs, &c.* (after 1798).

<sup>93</sup> Published by William Wright, Newcastle, 1801. Reprinted in facsimile edition, 1980, by Northumbrian Pipers Society.

Miss Rickaby's REEL.

by A. Mackintosh.



The new Tyne Bridge.

by T. W.

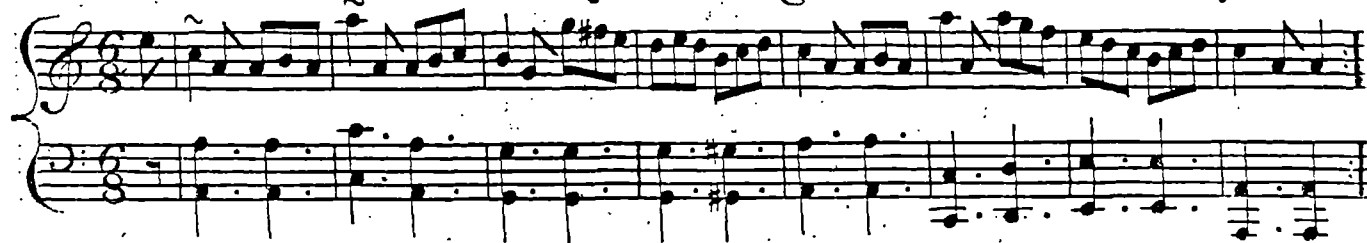


Plate 27: Two Tunes from Abraham Mackintosh's *A Collection of Strathspeys, Reels, Jigs, &c.* (after 1798).

editor. So great was the prestige of composition that one dancing master, Ivie Gregg, who had worked in Newcastle for many years, finally produced a book of dance tunes in the year before his death and thereafter proudly labelled himself in advertisements as ‘dancing-master *and* composer’.<sup>94</sup>

Some of this music was published in London. Preston of the Strand published piano works by two organists of St. Andrew’s church – *The German Spa, A favourite country dance Adapted as A RONDO for the Piano Forte or Harpsichord* by George Barren, and a piano-forte sonata by Henry Monro.<sup>95</sup> *Two Marches for Clarinets, Horns and Bassoons, also Adapted for the Harpsichord or Piano-Forte* by Thomas Wright were published by G. Goulding of Pall Mall.<sup>96</sup> (All Wright’s published works for military bands include piano versions – idiomatic re-workings rather than direct transliterations – indicating that they were aimed at the domestic market and the amateur player.) Another of Wright’s works – *Gen<sup>l</sup> Suwarrow’s March* – was published in Edinburgh.<sup>97</sup>

From the late 1790s, however, Newcastle had its own music publisher – the first since the elder Barber’s activities in mid-century. William Wright first offered this service – ‘Music neatly and correctly engraved’ – in February 1799,<sup>98</sup> and over the next few years turned out a large number of musical publications of various kinds, including music by his brother, by Thomas Thompson and by Edward Callendar (the organist of All Saints at the turn of the century). Peacock’s book of pipe tunes was published by him as probably were Mackintosh’s tunes; he also published collections put together by

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<sup>94</sup> *Six Minuets for Two Violins & Violincello, [sic] Adapted for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte, with Three Allemands & Three Reels Composed by I. Gregg, Dancing Master, Newcastle* (published c1794). For a full discussion of this spate of composition, see R. Southey, ‘Compositional Activity in Newcastle upon Tyne at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century’, *The Consort* (Journal of the Dolmetsch Foundation), Summer 2000, Vol. 56, pp. 17-32.

<sup>95</sup> No dates are known for these works. Monro was organist of St. Andrew’s from 1796.

<sup>96</sup> n.d.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Wright, *Gen<sup>l</sup> Suwarrow’s march for Clarinets, Horns, bassoons and Octave-Flute, adapted for the Piano-Forte* (John Hamilton, Edinburgh, n.d.). Suwarrow was a Swiss general who enjoyed a brief fame for resisting the French.

<sup>98</sup> NC 4 February 1799.

himself from various sources, for instance, *William Wright's Collection of Reels and Dances*.<sup>99</sup> William himself seems to have been the composer of a wide variety of anonymous works intended for the novice piano forte player – *A Favorite Rondeau Arranged for the Piano Forte* and *Six Favorite Waltz's Arranged for the harp or Piano Forte*.<sup>100</sup> William's grasp of harmony, unlike his brother's, was sometimes erratic.<sup>101</sup>

#### IV: Waits and bands

The abolition of the office of wait in 1793 came, ironically, as the office was beginning to attract a higher quality of musician. From the mid-1780s, the waits were all men who would have regarded themselves as professional musicians rather than the innkeepers and tradesman who filled the posts elsewhere: John Thompson, William Wright, John Peacock, William Grey (a cellist who played at public concerts and occasionally acted as principal cellist in Alexander Munro Kinlock's absence)<sup>102</sup> and John Aldridge (who may have been organist of the Catholic Chapel in the city at a later date).<sup>103</sup>

The waits continued to play at local venues including concerts and probably, as at York, comprised almost the entire band used for dancing Assemblies. In the large Assembly Room on Westgate Road – the principal venue for dancing assemblies, the band occupied 'a very light and elegant music-gallery'; the gallery, however, was small and surviving Assembly Room accounts indicate that the numbers of musicians in the band were few. On 16 April 1798, for instance, the Directors of the Assembly Rooms paid four guineas for eight musicians – a payment of half a guinea each per night, the same rate received by the York waits for similar duties.<sup>104</sup> This number of musicians

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<sup>99</sup> NC 4 February 1799.

<sup>100</sup> Newcastle, William Wright, pre-1802.

<sup>101</sup> See Appendix 4 for a full list of music published by William Wright.

<sup>102</sup> NC 17 January 1789.

<sup>103</sup> Co. Co. 9 October 1786.

<sup>104</sup> TAWS 160/1/63, Assembly Room accounts, 16 April 1798.

was only employed on special occasions such as Race Week; on ordinary winter subscription nights, only two guineas was paid 'for musick', suggesting the use of only four musicians.<sup>105</sup>

This Assembly Room band may have been the same band that advertised in the *Newcastle Courant* in 1801 calling itself the Country Dance Band. This band, of which William Wright was certainly a member, played at the theatre (now managed by Stephen Kemble), for functions in private houses and, probably, at the balls which generally followed concerts in Newcastle. The advertisement stated:

The Musicians composing the Country Dance Band of Newcastle return their sincere thanks for the Many Favors conferred on them in that Part of their Profession; and as the Ladies and Gentlemen have frequently been disappointed, particularly on a Play Night, they take this Opportunity to inform their Friends, that they are now disengaged from Mr. Kemble, and are at Liberty any Night in the Week to serve any Party of Ladies and Gentlemen, who may please to Employ them, by applying at Mr. Wright's Music-Shop, High-Bridge, or to any other of the band.<sup>106</sup>

No other record of the band's activities survives.

For musicians in the 1790s, bands like these were important extra sources of income and one band was particularly prominent and, for a time, highly profitable for its members. Moreover, its foundation in 1795 unexpectedly revitalised musical life in Newcastle and caused it to flourish at a time when, elsewhere in the region, it was in decline.

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<sup>105</sup> TAWS 160/1/63, Assembly Room accounts, e.g. 10 August 1798.

<sup>106</sup> NC 21 November 1801.



**GRAND TROOP.** 7<sup>00</sup> 1

*For Clarinets, Horns, Flute, & Bassoons,*

Composed for the Use of the Newbourn Band.

*adapted for the Piano Forte,*

**By THOMAS WRIGHT,**

*of Newcastle-upon-Tyne* Pt. 1. 6

*Newcastle Printed & Sold by W. Wright, at his Music Shop High Bridge*

**Introduction**

B. Clar: 1<sup>mo</sup>

Clar: 2<sup>d</sup> & 3<sup>d</sup>

6<sup>th</sup> Flute

Corn in E<sup>b</sup>

Bassoon

**Maestoso** *p* *cres*

Plate 28: Opening of Thomas Wright's *Grand Troop*, composed for one of the local Volunteer Bands, (after 1795).

# 16

## ‘WAR’S ALARMS’: NEWCASTLE 1795-1803

### I: The Volunteer Band

Relations between England and France, never particularly cordial at any time in the eighteenth century, had worsened since the French Revolution of 1789, and in February 1793 the French declared war. References to the political situation had found their way into Newcastle concerts since the early 1790s with the playing of patriotic or martial music, the composition of works including references to tunes such as *Rule Britannia* and *God save the King*,<sup>1</sup> and an increasing use of bands from regiments quartered locally, such as the band of the West York Militia stationed in Tynemouth. This was not an unusual occurrence; as early as 1739, Charles Avison snr. had played patriotic airs to

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 15.

mark the War of Jenkins' Ear,<sup>2</sup> and during the American Revolution in the early 1780s, Edward Meredith had performed songs by Handel and Purcell in Matthias Hawdon's concerts. Nor was the composition of patriotic music to mark specific occasions unprecedented: the most notable example had been Hawdon's ode to celebrate the end of the American War.<sup>3</sup> But in the mid-1790s, the worsening political situation was incidentally to spark a new flurry of musical activity in Newcastle that was in direct contradistinction to the situation in Durham and York, where musical activity had either ceased or was in steady decline.

As the war against France proceeded, the British government became increasingly anxious about the threat of invasion along England's exposed eastern coasts and encouraged the setting up of volunteer regiments which would use those people most directly affected – the local inhabitants – to defend areas at risk.<sup>4</sup> In the middle years of the decade, volunteer regiments were set up in Durham, South Shields, Stockton, Sunderland and York and in many of the larger towns in the North-East. In Newcastle, a subscription was set up for a Volunteer Corps in January 1795,<sup>5</sup> and by July at least 200 local men had enlisted.<sup>6</sup> As was the case with all military regiments, volunteer corps were entitled to a band, provided the commander and officers were willing to pay their wages. While brief references in newspaper articles indicate that most of the North-Eastern volunteer corps had bands, only in Newcastle does the band seem to have consisted of more than a few wind players and a drummer, and to have given regular large-scale concerts.

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>4</sup> See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1701-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1992), pp. 287-319, for the development of the Volunteer Corps.

<sup>5</sup> *NA* 31 January 1795.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 July 1795.

The Newcastle Volunteer Corps band was certainly in existence by July 1795 when one of its members was murdered by drunken thieves.<sup>7</sup> In his Assize Concert a month later, Thomas Thompson, now organist of St. Nicholas after the death of Charles Avison, offered a repertoire with a strong military flavour, including a song 'called the BRITISH VOLUNTEERS, Dedicated to all the Volunteer Corps in the Kingdom'.<sup>8</sup> A fortnight after that, the Volunteer Corps held a field day:

About seven o'clock in the morning they paraded on the Forth green, dressed in their full uniform (which is scarlet faced with dark green, white kerseymere waistcoats, &c. round hats with bear skin crests, gold loop, button, and feather) attended by their excellent band of music.<sup>9</sup>

The excellence of the band prompted several more compliments in newspaper reports. A month later the band advertised a concert to be held on the anniversary of George III's coronation on 22 September; the concert was to be a benefit for the band's leader, Thomas Wright.<sup>10</sup>

The composition and size of the band is not entirely certain. It was augmented for the concert by a considerable number of outside helpers. The *Newcastle Courant* reported that 'the Band will be very numerous, as it will be augmented by the 1st West York Band, belonging to his Grace the Duke of Norfolk, and a great Number of Amateurs'.<sup>11</sup> Under normal circumstances, the composition of the band seems to have been a mixture of amateur and professional musicians. The member who was murdered in July 1795 was a carver and gilder,<sup>12</sup> and a number of gentlemen members of the corps took vocal parts at concerts.<sup>13</sup> But advertisements for later concerts indicate the presence of almost all the local professional musicians – Wright himself, his younger

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<sup>7</sup> *NCh* 4 July 1795. The *Newcastle Chronicle* insisted that the murder would not have taken place if the parties involved had been morally courageous enough to avoid drinking on a Sunday.

<sup>8</sup> *NC* 25 July 1795.

<sup>9</sup> *YCh* 29 August 1795.

<sup>10</sup> *NC* 12 September 1795.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 September 1795.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 July 1795.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 October 1795.

brother William, John and Thomas Thompson, Alexander Munro Kinlock, John Peacock and John Aldridge (both former waits).<sup>14</sup> Volunteer Corps muster rolls include a number of these names but do not list members of the band separately, thus preventing the identification of other amateur players. The musical composition of the band is suggested by the instrumentation of music composed for it by Thomas Wright. *Two Marches for Clarinets, Horns and Bassoons ... Composed for the Use of the Volunteer Corps of Newcastle upon Tyne ... BY THOMAS WRIGHT*, for instance, is scored for two Bb clarinet parts, horns in C, bassoons and octave-flute.<sup>15</sup> The augmentation for the September 1795 concert seems most likely to have added a substantial string section to accompany such pieces as Wright's clarinet concerto and the Coronation Anthem.

Advertisements for the concert stressed that much of the music would be newly composed for the occasion; this included Wright's clarinet concerto ('*The Subject of the Rondeau the Corn Riggs*') and a 'TRIO for a CLARIONET, A NEW INSTRUMENT CALLED A CORNO BASSETTO, and a VIOLONCELLO'. Wright also composed two military pieces to be played by both bands (the Volunteer Corps band and the West York Band) together, and '*A Martial Song and Chorus*, accompanied by Kettle Drums and trumpets'. The first act ended with *God save the King*, the second with the Coronation Anthem. No vocal soloists are named.<sup>16</sup> (Appendix 1)

The concert seems to have been enormously successful, particularly as it was the culmination of a day of festivities to mark the Coronation and was followed by a ball for which Wright provided 'a capital Band' (possibly the Country Dance Band).<sup>17</sup> The *Courant* commented that:

the company was remarkably brilliant, and more numerous than we remember to have seen on any former occasion. – The Ladies were very generally decorated with scarlet and green; and we

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<sup>14</sup> e.g. NC 22 October 1796.

<sup>15</sup> Published by G. Goulding of Pall Mall, n.d.

<sup>16</sup> NC 19 September 1795.

<sup>17</sup> Idem.

cannot help thinking it would be highly gratifying to the Volunteers, to have this compliment paid to them by the fair sex.<sup>18</sup>

Almost exactly a month later, the band put on a second concert that was almost as successful, this time for the benefit of the band itself. Vocal parts were taken by John Friend from Durham Cathedral and by members of the band including 'a gentleman'; Wright contributed a number of compositions including a clarinet concerto, and a violin and cello duet which he played with Alexander Munro Kinlock. Thomas Thompson played a new piano forte concerto composed by himself. In December, Wright took some of his compositions from these concerts to a similar concert in Sunderland, which also included volunteer songs composed by local actors and 'two new Marches composed for the Sunderland Volunteer Corps by Mr. Weyllandt' (the local organist).<sup>19</sup> Although the Sunderland Volunteer Corps continued in existence, it does not seem to have possessed a band substantial or experienced enough to hold regular concerts.

Initially the influence of the band on public music-making in Newcastle seemed slight; Thomas Thompson's annual benefit in February 1796 included little music of a military nature except *Rule Britannia* and *God save the King*.<sup>20</sup> Attention was focused on another Musical Festival planned for late July, taking the place of Thompson's Assize Concert. Thompson was in fact one of its main organisers, along with the ever-popular Edward Meredith. The festival was intended to emulate the 1791 festival organised by John Ashley and was ambitious in scope, presenting no fewer than six concerts over a four-day period. (Table 16.1)

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<sup>18</sup> NC 26 September 1795. Scarlet and green were the Volunteer Corps' colours.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 12 December 1795.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6 February 1796.

**Table 16.1: Music Festival, Newcastle, 27-30 July 1796<sup>21</sup>**

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Wednesday	27 July	St Nicholas Church (am)	<i>Messiah</i>
Thursday	28 July	St Nicholas Church (am)	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
		Assembly Rooms (pm)	Miscellaneous concert
Friday	29 July	St Nicholas Church (am)	Grand concert of sacred music
		Assembly Rooms (pm)	Grand miscellaneous concert
Saturday	30 July	St Nicholas Church (am)	<i>Redemption</i> <sup>22</sup>

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Advertisements suggest that Meredith and Thompson were striving to keep costs low; instead of the glittering array of London stars that had graced the 1791 festival, only three appeared: Cramer as first violin, Boyce (son of the composer) on double-bass, and Harrison as one of the vocal soloists. The majority of soloists were from the Lancashire/Yorkshire circuit that Meredith knew so well. Instrumentalists included Nicholson the flute player from Liverpool; singers included Miss Worrall (who had been such a great success in Durham's 1792 festival) and Mrs. Shepley from Manchester. The advertisements stated that:

the remaining Part of the Band will consist of the most approved Performers from Liverpool, Manchester, Durham, Newcastle, and Sunderland, with a complete Set of Chorus Singers, from Lancashire.<sup>23</sup>

Thomas Thompson played the organ.

The *Newcastle Courant* was confident that the festival would be a success, believing that 'the performance of oratorios at St. Nicholas Church will, we are persuaded, induce many genteel families residing at a distance to make this town their residence during the week'.<sup>24</sup> The mixture of repertoire, of the familiar and the unusual, might have been expected to attract large audiences but the turn-out was disappointing.

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<sup>21</sup> *NC* 25 June 1796.

<sup>22</sup> Compiled by Arnold from music at the Handel Commemoration in 1784. See McVeigh, *Concert Life*, p. 107.

<sup>23</sup> *NC* 25 June 1796.

<sup>24</sup> *NCh* 23 July 1796.

The *Courant* remarked that ‘the audiences ... were genteel, but not very numerous’.<sup>25</sup> The *Chronicle* believed that performances had been ‘well-attended’ but that ‘in consequence of the enormous expence incurred by the conductors, by the engagement of performers of eminence, the receipts have not been adequate to defray the disbursements’.<sup>26</sup> The paper lamented the financial blow to ‘the friendly, estimable character of Mr. Meredith’<sup>27</sup> and the *Courant* estimated the loss at nearly 120 guineas. This substantial loss not only deterred others from attempting another musical festival in the city until 1823, but in addition seems to have affected Thomas Thompson’s confidence in his abilities as a concert organiser – he held only one more concert after this date and the Assize Concert, which was traditionally put on by the St Nicholas organist, dropped out of the city’s musical calendar.

Nevertheless, an audience for music clearly existed in Newcastle – Thomas Wright and the Volunteer Band continued to find their benefits profitable. Wright at least seemed to have the ability to mount an expensive concert and still make a profit. For his second benefit as leader of the Volunteer Band, on 27 September 1796, he hired William Evance and John Friend from Durham for one of their by-now rare visits to Newcastle; Wright himself and a man called Weigh (who may have been a Volunteer) also sang. He advertised that he had ‘spared no expence to render this Concert productive of their Entertainment’ and that ‘the Band will be uncommonly numerous’.<sup>28</sup> The concert was held in the expensive New Assembly Rooms and Wright hired both Great and Small rooms there for the ball that followed. Clearly, he anticipated a large attendance.<sup>29</sup> The concert included, amongst other works, four new pieces composed

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<sup>25</sup> *NC* 6 August 1796.

<sup>26</sup> *NCh* 6 August 1796.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>28</sup> *NCh* 24 September 1796.

<sup>29</sup> His exact projection is not known; unlike other local musicians, Wright did not hire Bewick to print his tickets except on one occasion, for the subscription series in 1794. Wright never paid the bill for this occasion and Bewick eventually wrote off the debt [TAWs 1269/232 Bewick’s Accounts, 2 January 1794].



by Wright especially for the occasion – a clarinet concerto, two military sonatas, and ‘a martial song with a Chorus’. The band’s own benefit, six weeks later, used a new singing man, Nathaniel Brown, and presented more military works.<sup>30</sup> (Appendix 1) Again, both rooms were used in the New Assembly Rooms.

Wright was clearly extremely active in both the Volunteer Band’s concerts and in the preparation of material for them, and also in the theatre where he provided compositions on a regular basis, including songs,<sup>31</sup> incidental music,<sup>32</sup> and, in early 1795, a pantomime:

in one Act (never performed) called the FROLICS OF LILIPUT;  
Or, Harlequin’s trip to Brobdignag ... The Music entirely New,  
and composed for this Pantomime by Mr. WRIGHT. ...  
Principal Characters by Children only.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, he was leader of the Newcastle Musical Society whose activities continued in private although rarely in public; in January 1797, however, the Society held a public benefit for Wright in the Old Assembly Rooms in the Groat Market.<sup>34</sup> Only one aspect of Wright’s professional life was not running smoothly – his position as organist of St. Andrew’s. Since his appointment in 1790, Wright had fulfilled his duties as organist without apparent controversy. When in 1794 the City Corporation handed the responsibility for paying the organist to the church’s Vestry Meeting, the post was re-advertised (as a matter of form); Wright applied and was re-appointed without competition and without any reservations, or dissatisfaction with his performance, being expressed.<sup>35</sup> But over the next two years, Wright’s relationship with the churchwardens and parishioners took a sharp turn for the worse, with disputes over Wright’s employment of a deputy on those occasions when he could not be present. The matter

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<sup>30</sup> *NC* 22 October 1796.

<sup>31</sup> *CL* Playbill (Newcastle), 11 December 1795.

<sup>32</sup> *NC* 19 April 1788.

<sup>33</sup> *NCh* 10 January 1795. See Appendix 3 for a full list of Wright’s compositions.

<sup>34</sup> *NC* 7 January 1797.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 April 1794.

clearly came to a head one Sunday in October 1796, and early on the Monday morning Wright penned what Vestry Minutes later described as a 'Disrespectful Resignation'.<sup>36</sup>

Gentlemen,

I here send you the Keys of your organ, together with my resignation of the place of Organist. – I have been so chagrined and teas'd by the many ridiculous blunders which have so lately happened that I most sincerely lament I ever took the place.

Some dissatisfaction, as I am informed, has arisen from my having two or three Sunday afternoons employed a young Man to do the Duty for me.

Had this been suggested to me, I would have removed that cause of complaint by suffering him to play no more. – He has for some time done the duty for Mr. Thompson at St. Nicholas, from which I naturally concluded he was able to do mine. – I shall not take up your time with a long vindication of my conduct, as I have some reason to think it would be as useless as tedious. – Permit me however to observe to you that I flatter myself the Malevolence of my Enemies will ultimately tend as much to my advantage as the good wishes of my Friends. – I am, Gentlemen, Your Obt. And Humble Servant,  
Thos. Wright,  
Silver Street, Monday Morning.<sup>37</sup>

It seems possible that Wright had over-stretched himself and was unable to fulfil his duties; no more is heard of him as an organist.

## II: Subscription series, 1798-1803

The early part of 1797 was quiet musically, in terms of commercial concerts; only two were held. The first of these was another benefit for Wright from the Musical Society held on 12 January.<sup>38</sup> A fortnight later, the Musical Society held another benefit, this time for the benefit of the widow and children of Walter Claget.<sup>39</sup> Claget had evidently

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<sup>36</sup> NRO EP 13/77, Vestry Minutes of St. Andrew's Church, Newcastle, 10 October 1796.

<sup>37</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>38</sup> NC 7 January 1796.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 January 1797.

been suffering from a prolonged illness; his death on 26 January, at the age of about seventy four, had left his family almost destitute:<sup>40</sup>

Few cases present stronger claims upon the benevolence of the public than that of the late Mr. Walter Clagget, who, to ingenuity in his profession, joined the most amicable and inoffensive disposition; he has left a widow and five young children, who entirely depended upon his exertions for support to buffet the billows of life.<sup>41</sup>

As in 1796, most of the public musical activity in the city was concentrated in the second half of the year with Thompson's Assize Concert on 15 August,<sup>42</sup> Wright's benefit from the Volunteer Band on 17 October,<sup>43</sup> and the Volunteer Band's own benefit on 7 November.<sup>44</sup> Wright spent the last part of the year writing an opera for the theatre company, basing the work on Smolett's novel *Roderick Random*, possibly those sections early in the book that deal with the hero's travels through the North-East. The opera was performed on 13 December 1797 but may have been handicapped by the ill-health of its leading actor, Mr. Ryley.<sup>45</sup> It was given only one performance.

The concentration of concerts in the second half of the year was plainly unbalanced and the chief sufferer was the Volunteer Band, whose benefit was not as profitable as it might otherwise have been:

The Gentlemen belonging to the Newcastle Volunteer Corps having taken into their Consideration that the two Concerts being too near together, in the Autumn, were *injurious to the Band's Concert*. – They *therefore* have fixed that the Band have their ANNUAL CONCERT in the SPRING.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> NA 28 January 1797. One of Clagget's children, Theophilus John, had been baptised at St. Nicholas's three years earlier [Baptismal registers of St Nicholas's Church, Newcastle, 7 January 1794].

<sup>41</sup> NCh 28 January 1797.

<sup>42</sup> NC 5 August 1797.

<sup>43</sup> NA 7 October 1797.

<sup>44</sup> NC 28 October 1797.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 9 December 1797.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 17 March 1798.

BY DESIRE OF  
Sir J. E. Swinburne, Bart.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF  
Mr & Mrs Ryley.

On WEDNESDAY Evening, December 13th, 1797, will be presented  
A New Comic OPERA, call'd

# Roderick Random; OR, THE HUMOURS OF STRAP THE BARBER.

Written by MR RYLEY set to Music, with a new Overture, by Mr WRIGHT.

Roderick Random,	Mr COOKE.
Sir Tippy Twaddle, (a Boxing Baronet)	Mr ROCK.
Lieutenant Bowling,	Mr DENMAN.
Monfieur Lavement, (a French Apothecary)	Mr BEW.
Beau Billy,	Mr MELVIN.
Captain O'Donnel, Mr DE CAMP.	Concordance, (a Scotch Schoolmaster) Mr BLAND.
Strap, (the Barber)	Mr RYLEY.
Baillif, Mr PENN.	Philo, Mr MOUNTFORT.
Mr Worthy,	Mr KEMBLE.
Sophia,	Mrs BEW.
Miss Williams,	Mrs BRAMWELL.
Madame Lavement, Mrs RYLEY.	Molly Mackerel, Mrs BLAND.
Narcissa,	Mrs HORABOW.

Between the Play and Farce (for the LAST Time)

Mr RYLEY will give a SELECTION from

## THE BROOMS.

Structures on Acting.  
The Spouter confounded.  
The Winking Mayor.  
A Northumbrian Actor from the Banks of the  
Tyne.  
The Tragedy Tea Pot.  
The One-handed Actor making one Arm do  
the Business of two.  
Battering Politics--Knock me down Politics.

...and Politics in the Suds.  
Orthodox Brevity, or the Goose and Gridiron;  
with an entire new Comic Song.  
A Dissertation on Singing, or Street Melody  
exemplified in Poor Pat O'Conner, (the blind  
Sailor).  
The Queer Old Man, with a Fiddle accom-  
paniment.  
Joe and Bet the Ballad Singers.

The whole to conclude with

IMITATIONS of the BLACKBIRD, THRUSH, and LARK,

After the Manner of SIGNIOR ROSIGNOLLE.

To which will be added a Musical FARCE, (acted here but once) call'd

## LOCK and KEY.

Brummagem,	Mr ROCK.
Captain Vain,	Mr MELVIN.

The band's 1798 benefit therefore took place on 9 April 1798; John Friend and one of the Cathedral choristers were vocal soloists and the music performed included newly composed military pieces and the *Battle of Prague*.<sup>47</sup>

In May 1798, for his by-now annual benefit from the Musical Society, Wright – ever in search of something to make his concerts notable – proposed a concert of a type that had achieved some popularity in Bath in the early years of the decade,<sup>48</sup> but which had not previously been attempted in Newcastle. Each of the two acts of the concert concentrated on a different type of repertoire:

*THE FIRST ACT* Will consist entirely of ANCIENT MUSIC. Selected from the Vocal and Instrumental compositions of HANDEL, PURCELL, CORELLI, ARNE and GEMINIANI.  
*THE SECOND ACT.* On the contrary, will be composed of MODERN MUSIC ... In this Act will be given a *Quartetto* of *Pleyel's* in which SOURDINES *will be* introduced, Which will be the first Time of their being made Use of in public in Newcastle.<sup>49</sup>

'Ancient music' of the type pioneered and popularised in fashionable London society by such bodies as the Concert of Ancient Music had no such corresponding success in Newcastle. No reviews appeared in local papers, but in view of the fact that neither Wright nor anyone else held any further concerts of this type in Newcastle, it is likely that the format was not particularly popular. Moreover, local audiences apparently insisted upon hearing 'music entirely new'. The tag *new* frequently appeared before items ('a new clarinet concerto, a new sonata'); no less than seven items were tagged in this way for the Volunteer Band's benefit on 9 April 1798 – four new songs, two new military pieces for the band, and a new clarinet concerto for Wright. On several occasions, Wright made a point of remarking that music for a concert had been composed especially for the occasion. Concerts were stated to be 'as performed in

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<sup>47</sup> NC 17 March 1798.

<sup>48</sup> See Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts*, pp. 125-7.

<sup>49</sup> NA 21 April 1798.

Westminster Abbey' and music-sellers promised that 'every new publication [from London] will be regularly transmitted, as soon as published'.<sup>50</sup>

Although Wright's 'half and half' concert may not have been particularly popular, reactions to it and to the military concerts in the city must have been encouraging; in late September, a proposal was put forward for a new subscription series:

THE COMMITTEE appointed for conducting the SUBSCRIPTION CONCERTS beg Leave to inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of Newcastle and its Vicinity, that, previously to their Commencement, (which will be on Thursday, the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, at Brodie's Long Room) Subscriptions, at a Guinea each, will be received by the Committee nominated in the regulations.<sup>51</sup>

The concerts took place at fortnightly intervals between 11 October 1798 and 28 February 1799, producing a subscription of eleven concerts; a benefit for Wright on 26 March 1799 made up a twelfth.<sup>52</sup> Each was under the guidance of a President and Vice-President, presumably members of the Committee and possibly members of the Musical Society. Their duties are never explicitly stated. Wright was leader of the band and Alexander Munro Kinlock principal cellist.

Advertisements for individual concerts did not appear in local papers but three handbills survive – for the fifth concert on 6 December 1798 and the tenth and eleventh concerts on 14 and 28 February 1799. These show that the concerts fell into the customary pattern of two acts of five items each, alternating vocal and instrumental items. Wright's concert of ancient and modern music may have influenced at least some of the repertoire: a concerto grosso by Corelli began the second act of the 14 February concert, which also included Handel's overture from *Alcina*. No overtly military music was mentioned in the programmes, although symphonies by Haydn and various

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<sup>50</sup> *NCh* 4 June 1796.

<sup>51</sup> *NC* 22 September 1798.

<sup>52</sup> *NCh* 23 March 1799.

concertos may have had a military flavour. Wright's music was prominent and a clarinet concerto was included in each concert. A notable feature, however, is the great variety of composers whose music was performed; no less than nineteen composers are represented in the concerts, although only Wright, Haydn and Pleyel are represented by more than one work.<sup>53</sup> Pleyel's music had featured extensively in Wright's 1792 benefit and may have been a personal preference.<sup>54</sup>

A variety of other concerts took place in the city during the course of this subscription series: Wright's benefit from the Volunteer Band (November 1798),<sup>55</sup> the Band's own benefit (February 1799)<sup>56</sup> and a concert from a visitor to the city, a Mr. Sanders 'from Germany' (February 1799). Sanders – one of Newcastle's rare musical visitors in the 1780s and 1790s – played two instruments he claimed were unknown in the city, the harmonica and the basset horn. Thomas Wright as ever led the band and other local musicians almost certainly made up the rank and file.<sup>57</sup> Sanders may have lingered in the area for several months; Wright's subscription concert benefit on 26 March included a sonata on the basset horn.<sup>58</sup> July 1799 saw another charitable concert, held for the benefit of the family of Alexander Munro Kinlock's father. Adam Kinlock, a dancing master, had been killed by a fall from his horse while riding home to Newcastle from giving lessons in the country;<sup>59</sup> his son conducted the concert in which the actor, Charles Incledon, appeared as vocal soloist.<sup>60</sup> Alexander Kinlock took over his father's pupils and was also appointed Master of Ceremonies at the subscription

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<sup>53</sup> CL Handbills (Newcastle), passim. For a full analysis of these programmes and those of the succeeding series, see R. Southey, *The Whole Band, Vocal and Instrumental*, Third-Year Dissertation, University of Newcastle, 1997, pp. 50-56.

<sup>54</sup> NC 21 April 1792.

<sup>55</sup> NA 3 November 1798.

<sup>56</sup> NC 23 February 1799.

<sup>57</sup> NCh 2 February 1799.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 23 March 1799.

<sup>59</sup> NA 29 June 1799.

<sup>60</sup> NC 8 July 1799.

series.<sup>61</sup> He had been elected organist of All Saints in 1795;<sup>62</sup> these activities, plus his membership of the Volunteer and other bands,<sup>63</sup> must have made him almost as busy as Wright. This year (1799) set a new basic pattern for musical life in Newcastle, a pattern which continued over the turn of the century until around 1803: a winter subscription series of twelve concerts with the two Volunteer Band benefits – one in each half of the year – and an occasional concert by prestigious visitors such as Mr. Nason (described as ‘late of the Fenice Theatre, Venice’) who arrived in July 1800,<sup>64</sup> the violinist Salomon, who visited in October of the same year,<sup>65</sup> and Gertrude Mara returning to give a concert on 23 February 1802.<sup>66</sup>

Handbills survive for almost all the subscription concerts between October 1799 and the end of the 1803 season.<sup>67</sup> The three seasons between 1799 and 1802 consisted of twelve concerts each, the last (1802-3) of eight. As in the 1798-9 season, concerts took place fortnightly and were held at the Old Assembly Rooms in the Groat Market.<sup>68</sup> The rooms were much smaller than anything available in the New Rooms on Westgate Road and it is likely that the number of subscribers was never particularly large. In the first two seasons the cost of subscription rose from one guinea to £1 5s.<sup>69</sup>

All the concerts were under the direction of a President and Vice-President as before; their names were noted at the foot of the handbills. The names changed for every concert; although some men did appear on several occasions, the vast majority of men acted only once. Out of a total of forty different men performing these two offices between 1798 and 1803, well over half appear only once or twice. Only seven men

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<sup>61</sup> CL Handbills (Newcastle), passim.

<sup>62</sup> NCh 4 July 1795.

<sup>63</sup> See Conclusion.

<sup>64</sup> NC 12 July 1800.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 27 September 1800.

<sup>66</sup> CL Handbill (Newcastle), 23 February 1802.

<sup>67</sup> Southey, *The Whole Band*, pp. 50-56.

<sup>68</sup> CL Handbills (Newcastle), passim.

<sup>69</sup> NC 27 September 1800.



make multiple appearances; the most frequent appearance is that of a vice-president who acted on ten occasions, chiefly in 1801 and 1802.<sup>70</sup> Not all these individuals can be identified at this time and their social status is not clear. W. R. Callender, however, who acted as President for a concert on 18 November 1802, was a member of the family who forty years before had used their nursery gardens for summer concerts;<sup>71</sup> William Wright who acted on 15 April 1802 (no relation to Thomas or his brother) was a member of a local gentry family.<sup>72</sup> It is probable that most of these men were rich tradesmen and members of distinguished local families; further research is needed to throw light on this point.

A wide variety of music was presented to audiences; instrumental works by no fewer than 37 different composers were played over the five series, with a further 36 composers represented by vocal works. Over half of these contributed only one work; the core of the repertoire was limited to four composers: Pleyel, Haydn, Handel and Wright. Pleyel and Haydn were the most played instrumental composers, with Wright close behind; Handel was the most popular vocal composer, with a substantial number of songs by Thomas Thompson and Stephen Storace also being performed. Apart from Handel's works, 'ancient music' was not frequently performed, although the concerti grossi of Corelli were sometimes used to open acts, and the songs of Arne (who had been classified as an 'ancient' composer by Wright in his 1798 concert) were also sung. Roughly once a year, one of Avison's concerti grossi was played. (Appendix 1)

As in the 1798-99 season, overtly military or patriotic music was rarely performed, although Wright wrote an *Address to Peace* late in 1801 when an end to the war seemed imminent. But many items had, or could have had a military flavour. Haydn's Military Symphony was played on at least one occasion and possibly more –

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<sup>70</sup> CL Handbills (Newcastle), passim.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 18 November 1802.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 15 April 1802.

individual symphonies are rarely identified – and the *Battle of Prague* was ever popular. The ‘Glee of the Red Cross Knight’ by Calcott (detailing victories in the Holy Land) and Arne’s ‘The Soldier Tir’d of War’s Alarms’ were both frequently sung.<sup>73</sup> Words of traditional songs could be altered to contain contemporary references; thus the first verse of ‘The Highland Laddie’ became:

Oh! Where and oh! Where/is your Highland Laddie gone?  
He’s gone to fight the French/ For King George upon the throne.<sup>74</sup>

Some of Thomas Thompson’s songs were purely escapist (he had a fondness for songs about fairies), but others commemorate military events. In many ways these songs can be said to ‘domesticate’ the war, seeing the conflict through the eyes of familiar, reassuring figures. In ‘For you, my Lovely Maid’, for instance, the events of the war are told through the eyes of a sailor bidding his love farewell:

But now our Island’s fate demands,  
Each Gallant Sailors aid;  
Britannia’s flag triumphant stands  
While foes attempt t’invade.<sup>75</sup>

The Battle of the Nile prompted Thompson to write a sentimental ballad entitled ‘The Orphan Boy’s Tale’ in which a child celebrates in a town very like Newcastle, unaware of the implications of the victory:

How pleased was I when the glad sound  
Of Nelson’s vict’ry came  
Along the lighted streets to bound,  
And see the windows flame!  
To force me home my mother fought,  
She shuddered at my joy;  
For with my father’s life twas bought,  
Unhappy Orphan Boy.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> CL Handbills (Newcastle), passim.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 9 October 1800; R. Southey, *Whole Band*, p. 56.

<sup>75</sup> Published by Goulding, Phipps and d’Allmaine, n.d. (but probably between 1798 and 1810).

<sup>76</sup> Published by William Wright, Newcastle, n.d.

# Second Subscription Concert.

THURSDAY, October 29, 1801.

## ACT I.

SINFONIA.—*Haydn.*

SONG.—*Giordani.*

SONATA, (Grand Piano Forte, by Mr Thompson, jun.)—*Gyrowetz.*

DUETT.—*Dr Cooke.*

OVERTURE (Saul).—*Handel.*

## ACT II.

SINFONIA.—*Van-Hall.*

QUARTETTO.—*Pleyel.*

SONG.—*Thompson, jun.*

CONCERTO CLARIONET.—*Wright.*

FINALE.—*Rosetti.*

SONG.—TELL ME, TELL ME, &c.

MISS CLIFFORD.

TELL me, tell me, charming creature,  
Will you never ease my pain;  
Must I die for ev'ry feature,  
Must I always sue in vain?

Tears and sighing could not move you,  
For a lover ought to dare;  
When I plainly told I lov'd you,  
Then you said I went too far.

DUETT.—BUT THOU, O HOPE, &c.

MISS CLIFFORD.

BUT thou, O Hope, with eyes so fair,  
What was thy delightful measure?  
Still it whisper'd promis'd pleasure,  
And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail.  
Still would her touch the strain prolong,—  
And from the rocks, the woods, the vale,  
She call'd on Echo still thro' all the song:  
And where her sweetest theme she chose,

A soft responsive voice was heard at ev'ry close,  
And Hope, enchanted, smil'd, and wav'd her  
golden hair.

SONG.—HERE IN COOL GROT, &c.

MISS D. CLIFFORD.

HERE, in cool grot and mossy cell,  
We rural Fays and Fairies dwell,  
Though rarely seen by mortal eye,  
When the pale Moon, ascending high,  
Darts through yon trees her quiv'ring beams,  
We frisk it near these chrystal streams:  
Her beams, reflected from the wave,  
Afford the light our revels crave.  
The turf, with daisies 'broider'd o'er,  
Exceeds, we wot, the Parian floor.  
Nor yet for artful strains we call,  
But listen to the waters fall.  
Would you then taste our tranquil scene,  
Be sure your bosoms be serene,  
Devoid of care, devoid of strife,  
Devoid of all that poisons life:  
And much it 'vails you, in their place,  
To graft the love of human race.

JAMES ARCHBOLD, jun. President.  
WILLIAM BURRELL, Vice-President.

SUBSCRIBERS may procure their Tickets, by applying at Mrs ATKINSON'S, Stationer, in the Groat-Market.

Tickets, for Strangers, 3s. 6d. each, to be had at Mr SANDS'S.

It is expected that no Lady or Gentleman will leave the Concert-Room during the Performance of any Piece of Music.

The next Subscription Concert will be on THURSDAY the 11th November.

Newcastle, printed by S. Hodgson.

Plate 30: Handbill for Newcastle subscription concert. 29 October 1801.

All the local musicians appear to have taken part in these concerts – Wright led and played clarinet concertos, Kinlock was principal cellist and Master of Ceremonies. Piano forte works were played by Thomas Thompson and Henry Monro, the man who had taken over Wright's job as organist of St. Andrew's in 1796.<sup>77</sup> In the 1802-3 season, Monro and Thompson played in alternate concerts.<sup>78</sup> As far as vocal soloists are concerned, it is clear there had finally been a complete break with Durham Cathedral; not one of the singing men appeared in the series. Actresses from the theatre – principally Mrs. Bramwell and Elizabeth Kemble – sang many of the songs, but the 1799-1800 season also saw the emergence, for the first time, of two locally-based singers, the sisters Miss. J. and Miss Diana Clifford.<sup>79</sup> Nothing is known of the sisters' background; they lived with their mother in Northumberland Street and made their first known appearance in a concert on 26 December 1799.<sup>80</sup> They held the first of many benefits in the city a year later (23 December 1800).<sup>81</sup> Some concerts, therefore, such as that of 26 February 1801, used three female vocal soloists (the Cliffords and Mrs Bramwell) and Thomas Wright also occasionally sang in glees between the acts of the concerts, particularly in the 'Glee of the Red Cross Knight'.<sup>82</sup> The ladies included each other in their respective benefits, as in Mrs. Bramwell's benefit of 9 June 1801. Mrs. Bramwell sang songs by Handel and Cary, Miss Clifford one by Giordani and her sister Diana another by Murray. All joined in a patriotic rendering of God save the King.<sup>83</sup>

Despite this apparent embarrassment of riches, the Committee decided to hire a London singer for the last five concerts of the 1801-2 series.<sup>84</sup> The singer in question

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<sup>77</sup> Monro's first action on taking over the job had been to write a letter to the churchwardens complaining about the state of the organ which he claimed was badly out of tune, and blaming Thomas Wright for it [NRO EP 13/77, Vestry Minutes of St. Andrew's Church, Newcastle, 3 November 1796].

<sup>78</sup> CL Handbills, (Newcastle), *passim*.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>80</sup> CL Handbill (Newcastle), 26 December 1799.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* (Newcastle), 23 December 1800.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* (Newcastle), 26 February 1801.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* (Newcastle), 1 January 1801.

<sup>84</sup> NC 30 January 1802.

was Miss Dennett, who made her first appearance on 4 February 1802, sharing vocal parts with the Cliffords and taking part in a grand concert held on 20 April in celebration of Peace.<sup>85</sup> Miss Dennett was apparently popular, and later in the year the Committee hired another London singer – ‘the celebrated Miss Corri, pupil to Madame Dussek’ – to sing in the concerts of the 1802-3 season.<sup>86</sup> The immediate consequence of this extra expense was that the subscription price rose by 5s. to one and a half guineas and the number of concerts was reduced to eight. Corri did not appear until the second concert;<sup>87</sup> in the third she sang one of the few Italian songs to be heard at any time in Newcastle – ‘Ah, non sai’ – by Sarti, in which was popular enough to be sung again at the end of the series.<sup>88</sup>

The expense of hiring these London singers may have undermined the delicate state of finances in the series. At the end of the season, Corri went back to London and the subscription series seems to have come to a halt, the victim once again, perhaps, of over-ambitious plans by the managing Committee.

### III: Peace

The years before 1802 were highly profitable for Thomas Wright; he led the bands for the subscription series, the Musical Society, the theatre, the Volunteer Corps and, from at least 1800, the band of the Armed Association, another military organisation aimed at

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<sup>85</sup> See below.

<sup>86</sup> *NCh* 13 November 1802.

<sup>87</sup> *CL* Handbill (Newcastle), 18 November 1802.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* (Newcastle), 2 December 1802, 24 February 1803.

a rather higher social stratum than that held by most members of the Volunteer Corps. He was first choice for concerts put on by visitors such as Sanders and Madame Mara, and for concerts held by other local musicians such as the Cliffords. In 1800, he received no less than four benefits in the city: a Volunteer Band benefit held over for some unstated reason from the previous year and performed on 7 January,<sup>89</sup> a benefit from the subscription series' Committee on 24 April,<sup>90</sup> a second benefit from the Volunteer Band on 19 May<sup>91</sup> and a benefit from the Armed Association on 2 December.<sup>92</sup> But change was on the horizon. If the unexpected flurry of commercial musical activity over the turn of the century had been prompted or encouraged by the popularity of the concerts held by Wright and the Volunteer Band, its end was signalled by the demise of the band. That in turn was prompted by the political situation. In late 1801 and early 1802, the conflict between England and France seemed to be resolving itself. Peace negotiations produced what was at the time thought to be the end of the war.

On 20 April 1802, at the Theatre Royal in Moseley Street, a large-scale concert was held to celebrate the Peace with proceeds going to the benefit of the Newcastle Infirmary. This was one of Newcastle's rare three-act concerts and all local musicians – Wright, Thompson, Kinlock, the Cliffords, etc. – seem to have taken part, together with Miss Dennett, the London singer brought in for the subscription series. The music was by Handel, Arne, Martini, Mazzinghi, Storace, Kelly and others, and Wright played yet another clarinet concerto of his own composition.<sup>93</sup> (Ex. 16. 2) Curiously, the words of the songs at this concert strike a less than jubilant note. 'Tom Starboard' was the tale of a sailor surviving shipwreck and war only to return to find his sweetheart long dead. In

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<sup>89</sup> *NA* 4 January 1800. This concert may have been postponed because of Wright's 'severe indisposition'.

<sup>90</sup> *NC* 23 March 1800.

<sup>91</sup> *NCh* 10 May 1800.

<sup>92</sup> *CL* Handbill (Newcastle), 2 December 1800.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 20 April 1802.

‘Ah no! my love’ a girl laments her lover’s departure for war, while an apparently cheerful hunting song relates in detail the death of a deer. Even the best known of the songs, Arne’s ‘The Soldier Tir’d’, tells of a soldier who only consents to fight the enemy with a weary sense of being obliged by duty.<sup>94</sup>

**Ex. 16.2: Concert in celebration of Peace and for the benefit of the Infirmary, 20 April 1802.<sup>95</sup>**

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	Composer	Performer
PART I		
Overture, <i>Henry IV</i>	Martini	
Song, ‘Tom Starboard’	Mazzinghi	
Clarinet Concerto		Wright
Song, ‘Learn to Relish’	Thompson	
Overture, <i>Richard I</i> with Grand March	Handel	
PART II		
Song, ‘The Soldier Tir’d’	Arne	
Grand Military Symphony	Haydn	
Duet	Calcott	two Gentlemen of Newcastle
Piano forte concerto	Krumpholtz	Thompson
Song, ‘The sapling oak’	Storace	
PART III		
Overture, <i>Occasional Overture</i> with Grand March	Handel	
Song, ‘Ah! No, my love, no’	Kelly	
Concertante	Pleyel	
Song, ‘The Death of the Deer’	Reeve	
Overture, <i>Lodoiska</i>	Kreutzer	

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The peace had significant consequences for Thomas Wright and other musicians in the city. Following the concert, the Volunteer Corps and the Armed Association were both disbanded, and their bands with them. The Volunteer Corps at least was re-embodied in 1803 after a peace lasting less than two years, but its band is never mentioned in local papers and it is not clear whether it was reformed. The loss of income must have been considerable, especially in view of the end of the subscription

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<sup>94</sup> CL Handbill (Newcastle), 20 April 1802.

<sup>95</sup> Idem.

series in 1803. Wright at least found a solution, although it may not have made for a peaceful family life. Around July 1802 he set up a music shop on Pilgrim Street, not far from his brother's existing business. Thomas's reluctance to advertise means that the small amount of information available about his shop must be gleaned from passing references in other advertisements, such as those for the subscription series which list it as one of the places where tickets could be obtained. The shop is generally referred to as 'his Music Warehouse *opposite the High-Bridge*, Pilgrim-street' which suggests it was very close to his brother's shop.<sup>96</sup> The existence of two 'Wright's music-shops' clearly caused confusion; William's advertisements began to stress his address with unusual prominence.<sup>97</sup> The confusion was only increased when, in April 1803, William moved his own shop to Pilgrim Street.<sup>98</sup> Both shops were still in existence in 1805 and may have continued for much longer.<sup>99</sup> There is no record of William's opinion about his new competition.

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<sup>96</sup> NC 12 May 1803.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 17 July 1802.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 30 April 1803.

<sup>99</sup> Newspapers, *passim*.



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*Here in cool grot, and mossy cell?*

## A FAVORITE RONDEAU,

*(The Words from Shenstone)*

Composed by

*Thomas Thompson, Organist, Newcastle upon Tyne.*

LONDON

Fr. 1. 5.

*Printed for Goulding & Co. 25 Pall Mall & 76 St. James's Street, & W. Wright Newcastle upon Tyne.*

Where may be had all M<sup>r</sup>. Thompson's Songs.

Allegretto

mf

f

p

f

p

f

p

f

p

Volte

Plate 31: Song by Thomas Thompson, published in Newcastle around 1802.

# 17

## CONCLUSIONS

### **I: The North-East in 1800**

At the end of the eighteenth century, musical activity in the North-East was at a low ebb. In Durham, the standard of the choir had fallen considerably and few commercial concerts took place. The situation may be distorted by a change in emphasis in Newcastle newspapers from about 1800 whereby local news, particularly of cultural events, was ousted by an increasing concern with political and foreign news; the absence of advertisements or reviews of concerts may not therefore indicate that no concerts took place. However, there are no other documents remaining in Durham archives to suggest regular, or even occasional concerts, in the city in the early years of the nineteenth century.

In York, local newspapers did not alter to the same extent and the mix of local and national affairs in their columns remained much as it had during the eighteenth century. Advertisements indicate that early in the new century the subscription series limped on with John Erskine in charge; for instance, in 1803 Erskine offered six concerts at fortnightly intervals from January to April,<sup>1</sup> with a number of familiar faces: Matthew Camidge on piano forte, Edward Meredith as occasional vocal soloist and Mr. Nicholson, the flute player from Liverpool, as visiting performer. Erskine's daughter shared the vocal parts with a variety of guests, including Meredith and Miss Corri (taking time off from her engagement to the Newcastle subscription series). The cost of subscription was one guinea or 4s. a night.<sup>2</sup> A number of music teachers were still active in the city – Erskine himself (who also opened a music shop in Stonegate near the Minster),<sup>3</sup> John Rogers (once a pupil of the organist of Beverley),<sup>4</sup> a Mr. Hill (who advertised himself as 'from London')<sup>5</sup> and Matthew Camidge. Samuel Knapton started a music circulating library<sup>6</sup> and moved his shop from Blake Street to a 'more commodious' shop in Coney Street.<sup>7</sup> This seems to indicate that domestic music-making was in a healthy state, demanding a steady supply of teachers, music and other musical commodities. However, the contracted state of the subscription series, and the cancellation of a musical festival originally planned by Matthew Camidge and John Ashley for mid-September 1803 and called off after extensive and no doubt expensive advertisements, suggests that *public* music-making was out of favour. The resumption of war with France was a significant factor in calling off the festival – Camidge and Ashley advertised that they acted 'in consequence of the General Sentiment prevalent

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. *YCh* 13 January, 31 March 1803.

<sup>2</sup> *YCh* 13 January 1803. For a detailed account of the York subscription series in the early nineteenth century, see Griffiths, *A Musical Place*, pp. 124-139.

<sup>3</sup> *YC* 29 December 1804.

<sup>4</sup> *YCh* 21 July 1803.

<sup>5</sup> *YC* 15 August, 17 October 1803.

<sup>6</sup> *YCh* 13 January 1803.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 July 1803.

among the Patrons ... and the interest taken by every individual in the present state of Public affairs' and said that they looked forward to a time when 'an amusement of this nature will be more congenial to the Public Mind'.<sup>8</sup> However, the eighteenth century had been full of wars and few patrons had allowed such things to influence their concert-going activities – as witness the popularity of the Volunteer Band concerts in Newcastle nearly a decade earlier.

The flourishing of Newcastle's musical life in the 1790s, inspired as it was by the prevailing political conditions and exploiting those conditions to its own ends, still needs to be explained. A certain amount of its vitality must be put down to the presence of a number of young and active musicians: Thomas Wright, Alexander Munro Kinlock, Thomas Thompson and Henry Monro. The relative youth of these men contrasts with the age of the men running Durham and York concerts in the 1790s. Newcastle, as a port, was also in a position to profit from the war, which meant, despite war-time inflation, a constant supply of income (at least in certain classes) to spend on leisure activities. Finally, it received a constant influx of people connected with the armed forces, some of whom were willing and able to participate in musical activities; that they did so is evidenced by John Thompson's advertisements, offering special terms to such men ('MERCHANTS and CAPTAINS of SHIPS may be supplied with Music and Musical Instruments on the most reasonable Terms')<sup>9</sup> and by the timing of the subscription series to accommodate gentlemen of the army and navy.<sup>10</sup>

In the absence of newspaper entries, events in Newcastle in the early nineteenth century must be reconstructed from handbills and other documents that have survived in local libraries. Only isolated programmes for concerts given by visitors remain until 1809 when a handbill indicates that a subscription series was still, or again, in existence:

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<sup>8</sup> *YC* 22 August 1803.

<sup>9</sup> *NCh* 4 June 1796.

<sup>10</sup> *NC* 24 November 1792.

... six Concerts, to be held in the Concert Room, Bigg-market, to commence on Thursday Evening, February 2d., and be continued once a Fortnight, or as the Committee may deem expedient; the Performance to begin at Seven o'Clock each Evening.<sup>11</sup>

Nine men are named at the foot of the handbill; several had also appeared as Presidents and Vice-Presidents in the series at the turn of the century. The paper makes clear the status and duties of these officers and indicates that the ethos of the Gentleman Amateur was still alive and active:

The Committee will appoint a PRESIDENT each Night, out of the Subscribers who are Performers, for the Selection of the Music; and a VICE-PRESIDENT, who shall keep Order during the Evening.<sup>12</sup>

The subscription cost one and a half guineas; nightly tickets were 3s. 6d.

The series continued for several years and a full set of programmes (now in little booklets rather than single large sheets as before) survives for the 1811-12 series. These indicate that the format was much the same as before – two acts of five items each – and that some familiar people were still associated with the concerts. Thomas Wright still led the band and occasionally presented works of his own composition; a Divertimento for Violin, Tenor and Bassoon, for instance, was played in the third concert, although the clarinet concertos seem to be a thing of the past.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Thompson and Henry Monro still alternated as piano soloists. A Miss Melville was one of the vocal soloists.

By 1815, this series seems to have been replaced by another run by the Harmonic Society, a group of nine men consisting of three professional musicians – Alexander Munro Kinlock, and John and Thomas Thompson – and six amateurs. The series, also

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<sup>11</sup> CL Regulations of the Subscription Concerts, 1809.

<sup>12</sup> Idem.

<sup>13</sup> CL Concert programme, third subscription concert, 31 December 1812.

apparently led by Wright, was heavily weighted towards vocal music; although it preserved the alternation of vocal and instrumental music of earlier concerts, each vocal item consisted of two songs rather than one.<sup>14</sup>

The heyday of musical activities in the three centres was not identical. Newcastle was particularly active in the 1730s and again in the later 1750s and early 1760s, before suffering a lull until the revival of the mid-1790s – just the point at which musical life in London was declining. In Durham, the times of greatest activity were the 1750s when Garth and the Cathedral personnel put on competing series, and the 1780s when Meredith achieved unprecedented popularity. For York, the high point – brief but glorious – was the Italian period of the late 1730s and early 1740s, although Giardini's repeated visits for the Race Week concerts between 1750 and 1770 were later regarded with fond nostalgia. Throughout the 1750s and 1760s in York, musical life seem to have been stable though unspectacular; thereafter musical activity was in steady and slow decline until the end of the century.

Many of these differences can be attributed to local factors. In York in the 1740s and in Newcastle in the 1780s, musical activity was at a low ebb largely because of the financial failings of individual musicians; in Newcastle in the later 1790s, it thrived, at least in part, because of the dynamism and energy of a number of young active musicians, particularly Thomas Wright. Economic factors may also have played a part; inflation during the French Revolutionary Wars, and lack of confidence and preoccupation with other matters may have deterred participation in public activities which could have been considered frivolous – hence the reaction to Camidge and

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<sup>14</sup> CL Concert programmes, Harmonic Society Subscription Series, 1815-16, *passim*.

Ashley's aborted musical festival in 1803. It should be noted that these patterns of activity do not correspond to that of London; the 'rage for music' of the 1780s and early 1790s in the capital came at a time where, at least in Newcastle and York, musical activity was in decline. Only Edward Meredith's popularity, and a brief fashion for oratorios in the years immediately following the 1784 Handel Commemoration, echo the London trend.

## **II: Gentlemen Amateurs and commercial concert-giving**

One of the most noticeable features of eighteenth-century concert-life in the North-East is the considerable involvement of amateurs – the so-called *Gentlemen Amateurs*. There was no clear divide between professional musicians as the providers of musical products and audiences as consumers of it. Gentlemen Amateurs, many of them members of local musical societies, were not passive consumers but active participants. In York and Newcastle, Gentlemen Amateurs were active in the origination of the first subscription series: the twelve gentlemen who hired Avison as musical director in 1735 and the Gentlemen Directors of York's Musick Assembly. In Newcastle, their organisational and financial management was brief although they returned to it at the end of the century; in York, they controlled the series until the mid-1770s. Elsewhere, in mid-century Durham and in 1770s Morpeth, 'Gentlemen Subscription Concerts' make the connection explicit; in Sunderland and in Durham in 1796, committees running the series were also made up of private gentlemen.

Their effect on the music played and heard at concerts is unclear. In Newcastle, the original twelve gentlemen gave up their right to choose repertoire almost immediately and did not reclaim it until the end of the century. In Garth's Durham

series, the small amount of evidence available indicates that repertoire was chosen at the midday rehearsal for each concert; many of the gentlemen subscribers seem to have participated in the discussion, but the final decision clearly lay with Garth and Avison.

The participation of these gentlemen in concerts as players, generally in rank-and-file roles, but also occasionally in principal parts, is supported by evidence that is somewhat piecemeal; it is clear, however, that Avison's orchestra had amateur members, as did benefit concerts later in the century in places such as Sunderland, and it is likely that their participation was commonplace.<sup>15</sup> It is not always possible to be certain that the composition of specific pieces of music – for instance, Avison's concertos – was affected by the presence of these amateurs or indeed that these works were composed specifically for their performance, although it seems highly probable. On one occasion, Avison refers to arranging Rameau's works 'for our concert';<sup>16</sup> it is likely that this arrangement in some respects involved some simplification of parts to allow for a mixed range of abilities within the orchestra. More generally, his objection to double-stopping, on the grounds that it was impossible to play both notes with equal pressure and therefore equal stress, was probably based on his experience with this semi-amateur orchestra.<sup>17</sup> The works that Thomas Wright wrote in the 1790s for the local Volunteer Band are also relatively simple in nature, suggesting that at least some of the amateur players were inexperienced; the idiomatic piano versions appended to the published version of these pieces and intended for domestic playing are generally more difficult.<sup>18</sup>

The involvement of amateurs as performers continued in Newcastle into the

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<sup>15</sup> NA 2 June 1792. Thomas Wright's advertisement for the King's birthday concert in Sunderland in 1792 noted that 'As the Gentlemen Performers, not only of Sunderland, but of Newcastle also, have kindly promised Mr. Wright their assistance on that night, the Band will be much more numerous than usual'.

<sup>16</sup> NC 14-21 September 1751.

<sup>17</sup> Avison, *Essay on Musical Expression*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> See Plate 28.



nineteenth century. In the 1811-12 subscription series, Miss Melville's fellow vocal soloist was 'a Gentleman Amateur' and her renderings of Handelian arias were followed by the appropriate choruses sung by amateurs and credited as such in the programmes.<sup>19</sup> A Choral Society, clearly an amateur body, gave a public concert on 8 August 1811, a two-part concert including works by Handel, Shield, Calcott and Haydn amongst others.<sup>20</sup> More work is necessary to establish the identity of the various amateur societies that sprang up in the area in the early nineteenth century and the nature of their relationship with professional musicians.

The influence of the Gentlemen Amateurs on commercial music-making in the region was perhaps most pronounced in their desire to bring well-known and fashionable soloists and music to the area. As far as performers were concerned, they were assisted by the regions's position *en route* between the two major centres of Edinburgh and London; many well-known soloists were 'caught' in passing: Avison hired Signora Cremonini as she abandoned the Edinburgh Musical Society in favour of London life, Matthias Hawdon persuaded Salomon to lead his band in a subscription concert. But the Gentlemen Directors in both Newcastle and York had their fingers burnt by over-ambitious plans, hiring expensive soloists to the detriment of the financial stability of the series. Professional musicians were generally more successful in their plans, possibly because of a more realistic (or pessimistic) view of the practicalities of the situation, although even they were not infallible, as the case of Matthias Hawdon demonstrates. Nevertheless, Giardini's repeated visits to the area over a period of twenty years showed that it was perfectly possible to hire the best performers without bankrupting the concert organisers.

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<sup>19</sup> e.g. CL Concert programme, third subscription concert, 19 December 1811.

<sup>20</sup> CL Handbill, (Newcastle), 8 August 1811.

### III: Regional movement of musicians

The amount of travelling undertaken by musicians both in search of a permanent niche and once settled, in the course of their day-to-day activities, could be enormous. Few went as far as Charles Avison jnr. (to St. Petersburg) or William Bewley of York (to Barbados)<sup>21</sup> but some travelled considerably within the region, and outside it. Some men, like Miles Coyle and Thomas Shaw, came into the area from outside, sometimes staying permanently, sometimes moving on after a few years. Some local men – John Hebden, for instance – tried to establish themselves in London; more moved within a more circumscribed though still extensive area. Matthias Hawden's travellings covered the entire Northern area as he moved from Newcastle to Hull in 1751, on to Beverley in 1769 and back to Newcastle in 1776. Hawdon's son, Thomas, travelled even more widely, moving from St. Andrew's Church in Newcastle to the Episcopal Chapel in Dundee, then on to Hull before finally returning to Newcastle during his father's final illness; when he died six years after his return to Newcastle, he was still only twenty eight years old. Another restless traveller was Robert Barber, who tried to establish himself in Newcastle, Aberdeen and Newcastle again before settling in Manchester.

Once established in an area, the amount of travelling undertaken by some musicians during the course of their day-to-day business was also considerable. James Hesletine and John Garth of Durham both travelled extensively on teaching activities; Garth covered most of Durham and north Yorkshire and is known to have played in concerts in Newcastle, Stockton, York and as far afield as Kirkleatham in Yorkshire. James Hesletine travelled south with prebendaries of the Cathedral – on some occasions

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<sup>21</sup> See Biographical Index.

taking with him members of the choir to provide private music for his hosts. The instrumentalists of York were members of the 'oratorio circuit' that covered Lancashire and Yorkshire, as were their colleagues from Halifax, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Wakefield and a number of other towns. Well-known singers such as Mrs. Hudson and Edward Meredith could travel considerable distances within the course of a musical season, singing both locally and in London and Edinburgh. Meredith's early travels took him round such towns as Sunderland, Tynemouth and Morpeth; these were replaced, when he moved to Liverpool, by the towns of the oratorio circuit – Manchester, Preston, Halifax, Tadcaster and Newark. There were certainly musicians within the area who did not travel very far; these musicians principally comprised the waits who (particularly in smaller places such as Sunderland, Morpeth and Berwick) tended to be men of another profession earning extra income in their spare time; even here, however, a number of waits within Yorkshire clearly travelled around the county; the York Assembly Room minutes frequently detail payments to waits from Ripon, Leeds and elsewhere, for playing during Race and Assize Weeks.

#### **IV: Networks of musicians and their effect on the spread of repertoire**

The constant movement of musicians within the North-East area and further afield created a wide-ranging series of networks amongst musicians. For the most part, the rivalry that sometimes characterised London's musical life was rarely evident in the North-East. Only in Durham did two series clash, in the 1750s, and even here the musicians on both sides seem to have met and played together in concerts with at least civility if not friendship. The antagonism to Garth's short-lived series seems principally to have been expressed by Gentlemen Amateurs, as represented by the Dean and

prebendaries of the Cathedral; James Hesletine, the organist, was known to have felt a violent dislike for Charles Avison, but even the Dean thought this both extreme and undesirable in its consequences. Charles Avison's behaviour towards the Swiss violinist who led his 1735 subscription series was, if the claims are justified, both unpleasant and highly personal; his argument with Charles Claget in 1759, apparently based on a suspicion that Claget was attempting to set up a rival subscription series, is more understandable, in view of events in Durham. Here too Gentlemen Amateurs were involved in the arguments, writing, for instance, long, vicious letters to the newspapers about the Swiss violinist's iniquities. The hostility expressed to Mr. Parry, the Welsh harpist, may also have been their doing.

Elsewhere, co-operation was the usual keyword; Avison and Garth shared personnel in their respective series and the Durham Musical Festival of 1792 included performers from throughout the area, as did numerous smaller concerts. In all probability, the number of performers was so small that co-operation was an essential prerequisite for successful concert-promotion. As a result, many concerts bore a great resemblance to each other; there was little difference in terms of personnel and repertoire between benefit concerts for Thomas Wright and Thomas Thompson in Newcastle, or between those for John Camidge and Miles Coyle in York. Other activities also benefited from co-operation; in 1792 for instance, Robert Sutherland was careful to get the agreement of other organists in the city (Wright and Avison) before setting himself up as the chief tuner for the area.<sup>22</sup>

The networks established by this constant movement could be interconnected. Charles Avison's connections with Hull – the organist there may have been his cousin – contributed to Matthias Hawdon's appointment there in 1751 and Hawdon in turn patronised such instrument-makers as Haxby, recommending him for work as far south

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<sup>22</sup> NC 31 March 1792.

as Lincolnshire. His contacts with York musicians also led to the performances of Mrs. Hudson and Thomas Shaw in Newcastle. Meredith's move to Liverpool, in strengthening his involvement with the oratorio circuit (with which Hawdon had been involved a decade earlier) brought him into contact with musicians on the circuit – the flautist Nicholson and the singer Mrs. Shepley for instance – who later travelled north with him for oratorio and festival performances in Newcastle. Erskine's connections in London and Dublin brought such notables as Louisa Gautherot to York; Avison's contacts brought Felice Giardini.

The effect of all this movement on the music heard by local audiences could be profound; the sudden preponderance of vocal music in Newcastle concerts in the 1780s under the dominance of the Durham Choir is particularly noticeable. More subtle effects also took place; dancing masters brought back the latest dances from London and Paris, theatre companies imported London productions in very short order (even if the versions were pirated or imperfect). The only Italian songs heard in Newcastle concerts were sung by visiting London notables; Thomas Wright introduced Bach's double orchestra overtures to Newcastle after taking part in performances in York. And it was not until Matthias Hawdon arrived in Newcastle in 1777 that the habit of putting on whole oratorios, so prevalent in Yorkshire, was taken up there.

## **V: The influence of London**

The influence of London on repertoire and musical life in general is more problematic. Roy Porter's claim (quoted in Chapter One) that provincial cultural life was merely imitative of London's is supported by some evidence. It can be argued that concert-life itself was ultimately imitative of the capital, where concerts began, and the establishment of subscription series in Newcastle, hard upon the heels of Avison's return

from the capital, suggests that he brought the idea back with him. It is clear that any musician with ambition spent at least some time in London for 'improvement'. From the travels of Durham Cathedral singers at the beginning of the century (when travelling was far from easy) to Thomas Hawdon and Thomas Thompson at the end of the century, London remained an attractive prospect to North-Eastern musicians. For some – Shield, Hebden, Nares – it was a permanent move with varying degrees of success; for others – Hawdon, Thomas Wright, George Barren – only a temporary visit; Thomas Wright of Newcastle, for instance, may have spent a year or two at the Opera House. Other musicians travelled between the region and the capital on a regular basis. Edward Miller, organist of Doncaster, is outside the scope of this dissertation to discuss in detail, but may have been emulated by others within the region; having studied in London as a young man, he was active within the midlands and north, but also travelled to London to assist with concerts for the New Musical Fund (a body set up to assist indigent musicians).<sup>23</sup> A more detailed study of the records of such bodies, of establishments such as the Opera House and of events such as the Handel Commemorations, as well as London newspapers in general, might throw more light on the activities of Northern musicians within the capital itself and of their prominence there – or lack of it. In the light of William Herschel's comments about the difficulties of establishing oneself in the competitive and often unpleasant musical world of the capital, and the predilection of the fashionable world for foreign performers, it is tempting to speculate that Charles Avison's decision to return to Newcastle in 1735 was less from a nostalgic longing for his birthplace or an altruistic desire to educate it musically, but more from a pragmatic realisation that perhaps it would be better to be a big fish in a small pond than to struggle in the ocean of London.

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<sup>23</sup> J. M. Black, 'Miller, Edward', *Grove*, 12, p. 321. For the New Musical Fund which was designed principally to help provincial musicians, see McVeigh, *Concert Life*, p. 37.

The constant resort to London for 'improvement' suggests a looking towards the capital as a source of good things. This was echoed elsewhere. Endless theatrical performances were advertised with such phrases as 'as performed with applause at Covent-Garden'; later concerts of Sacred Music were tagged 'as performed in Westminster Abbey'. Towards the end of the century, music-sellers who boasted of the speed with which they could obtain new music from London played on a desire for the novel and fashionable, of which London was seen to be the epitome. York's desire to copy these latest fashions by employing fashionable Italian performers in the late 1730s and early 1740s, which led to the bankruptcy of the series, and the persistent importation of performers of all nationalities such as Giardini, Noferi, Gautherot and Knerler, indicates a determination to share in the pleasures heard in the capital. It is hardly surprising, however, given the acknowledged excellence of some of these performers, that provincial audiences should wish to hear them; their popularity in the capital may have been coincidental or at least merely an added attraction.

Moreover, the region's emulation of the capital was by no means complete, nor indeed one-sided. The popularity of musical festivals in the provinces was an inspiration for the Handel Commemorations of the 1780s and 1790s in London, and a contributory factor to their success. The sudden, and short-lived, passion for complete oratorio performances in concerts in York and the surrounding area between 1769 and 1774 took place long before the London Commemorations. Nor does Porter's claim that 'Burghers adopted Handel as the staple of regional musical life hard on his oratorio triumphs in London' hold entirely true. Handel was certainly a staple of musical life in Durham throughout the century, fuelled by the natural emphasis on vocal music in the city's concerts and by the conservative tastes of the prebendaries and gentry families who made up the bulk of the audiences there; there seems to have been no lull in his popularity in the city. But Garth seems to have played few or none of *Handel's* works

and Avison's reservations about his music limited performances in Newcastle. Even when Handel was more frequently performed in Newcastle during the last quarter of the century, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that he was not particularly popular. The concert series organised by Matthias Hawdon in which the Durham Choir was pre-eminent, and the one series organised by the choir members themselves in 1785 in which Handel's music was extensively played, preceded a rapid decline in commercial music-making in the city. John Ashley's Musical Festival in 1791, almost exclusively Handelian in repertoire, was enormously popular, but Meredith's attempt to mount a similar festival in 1796 (almost identical from the point of view of repertoire) was a financial disaster. As the principal difference between the two festivals was in the personnel used – Meredith's were principally local (or at least northern); Ashley's were from London and abroad – it is hard to deny the conclusion that the attraction in 1791 had been not Handel but the famous and fashionable soloists such as Madame Mara.

In Newcastle certainly, and in York, music was linked to fashion in the sense that it constantly emphasised the novel and new. Concert after concert was advertised as having 'music entirely new' or 'music composed particularly for the occasion'. The most common tag in advertisements was *new* - a new sonata, a new favourite song and so on. Northern audiences were quick to abandon yesterday's music; the fashion for ancient music that was so strong in London and Bath in the 1780s and 1790s, does not seem to have reached York at all, and only one concert of ancient music is known in Newcastle – Thomas Wright's 'half and half' concert of 1798. Wright was keenly alert to the desires of his audiences; he never put on another concert of the type. Handel, Corelli and Geminiani were almost entirely absent from the turn-of-the-century subscription concerts.

Although the North shared London's penchant for music as fashion, it was not to the same extent an aristocratic pastime or a means of emphasising a social elite



(although prices of concert tickets clearly excluded labourers and other working groups). As far as can be discerned from the limited surviving evidence, Durham's audiences came closest in character to London's, consisting as they did of prebendaries who were often scions of noble families. But in York and Newcastle, the Gentlemen Directors of the concerts, as far as they can at present be identified, seem to have been of the middle class, including tradesmen, clergymen, doctors and officers of the navy and army. While some of these may have had at least gentry, if not aristocratic, connections, their overall middle-class, professional profile may explain their lack of enthusiasm for ancient music with its political and upper-class connotations.<sup>24</sup>

## **VI: Further issues to be explored**

A number of issues have arisen during the course of this study which are beyond its scope to discuss, but which suggest profitable and interesting avenues for further investigation. In some ways, the musicologist is left with even more questions at the end of the study than at the beginning. To what uses was music put? Charles Avison justified his public concerts in 1758 by appealing to the trade they generated, the social cohesion they encouraged and the good image they gave of the city to visitors; in 1790s Newcastle, music was used as a patriotic instrument to encourage a warlike spirit and a determination to defeat the enemy. What was the status of local musicians? Garth, Avison and Hesletine mixed socially with their audiences; both Avison and Thomas Wright were careful to describe themselves as 'gentleman' in their later years. What exactly was the standing of their audiences? A closer examination of handbills from the

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<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of the social and political connotations of the London Handel Commemorations and of ancient music in general, see McVeigh, *Concert Life*, pp. 22-27.

Newcastle series at the turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries, with a view to identifying individuals and their social status would be informative. What were the activities of North-Eastern musicians once they reached London? Did they find it easy to make a living? Were the generally short stays made by such musicians intended or did experience of life in the capital convince some Northern musicians that they would be better off working in the provinces?<sup>25</sup>

Advertisements in newspapers indicate that the amount of music composed locally throughout the eighteenth century was surprisingly large. Thomas Wright of Newcastle, with a total of 69 known works in a twenty year period at the end of the century, is perhaps the most obvious example of this, but others also turned out large quantities of music: Thomas Thompson in Newcastle, Thomas Shaw in York, and Thomas Ebdon and William Evance in Durham. Some of these works were small-scale – songs or pieces for Volunteer Bands – but more substantial pieces – pantomimes, ballad operas, keyboard concertos and symphonies – were also produced. A large proportion of this music, particularly towards the end of the century, was written for the domestic market and a surprisingly large amount survives to this day in libraries and private collections. A more prolonged search might reveal yet more surviving works; a more detailed examination of the types of composition, the uses to which it was put and the extent to which they were affected by contemporary trends would be instructive.

In view of the concern of this study with links outside the North-East area, it would be interesting to look north rather than south and to examine the links between

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas Bewick describes in his *Memoir* how he went to London with an intention to stay but changed his mind upon discovering the conditions there. He disliked the impersonal atmosphere and the general air of neglect and unfriendliness, writing that 'I did not like London – it appeared to me to be a World of itself where every thing in the extreme, might at once be seen – extreme riches – extreme poverty – extreme Grandeur & extreme wretchedness – all of which were such as I had not contemplated upon before'. It is, however, only fair to say that some friends there, also originally from Newcastle, were astonished by his decision to return home. Bewick, *Memoir*, pp. 69-76.

musicians in the region and their colleagues in Scotland. A number of northern musicians – Cornforth Gelson, Robert Barber, Thomas Hawdon, John Ross – are known to have taken up posts in the cities of eastern Scotland on a permanent or temporary basis, and some – Edward Meredith, for example – travelled there intermittently to participate in concerts. Moreover, several pieces of music by North-Eastern composers – for instance, Thomas Wright’s *Gen<sup>l</sup> Suwarrow’s March* – were published in Scotland. Edinburgh would seem to be the most likely place to trace such links for a number of reasons: its proximity to Newcastle, its active musical society and publishers, and the survival of many of the records connected with these bodies. Aberdeen was another city with an active Musical Society and John Ross’s long connection with the city may have attracted other North-Eastern musicians.

## **VII: The standing of ‘provincial’ musicians**

In the rush to document the use of nationally, and internationally, famous musicians in the area, the musicologist should not be tempted to think that the resident ‘local’ musicians were provincial nonentities. While some waits may fit this description, other musicians – Charles Avison, John Garth, James Hesletine and Frances Hudson for instance – were well-known both within the region and outside it. Avison’s *Essay on Musical Expression* was published in London and widely read and commented upon; he wrote music for London institutions such as the Lock Hospital and was well-acquainted with prominent London figures such as Geminiani and Giardini. Hesletine’s travels south with prebendaries, Frances Hudson’s performances in oratorios in London and Garth’s teaching activities brought them into contact directly or indirectly with London

and the fashionable world. Subscription lists indicate that the music these musicians produced was bought by societies and individuals throughout the country.<sup>26</sup>

It is difficult to assess the extent to which these people are, or are not, exceptional figures. Extravagant claims in some quarters about the quality of Avison's music and his status as a composer should not obscure his significance as a pivotal figure in the cultural life of the city in which he lived. His abilities and his shrewdness as a business-man and concert promoter (aided by the fortuitous circumstances of his longevity), and his determination to see off all rivals lent a stability to Newcastle's musical life for a large part of the eighteenth century, and the rapidity with which that musical life fell apart after his death is a testament to his management of it. His career indicates the extent to which a musician with ability and shrewdness could thrive and even grow wealthy in a provincial city in the eighteenth century. No-one else in the region quite matched that ability, although Thomas Ebdon filled a very similar role in Durham; it is difficult, however, to assess the extent to which he was aided by the ecclesiastical establishment of the Cathedral. In York, no one person ever reached the same level of pre-eminence; in Newcastle, towards the end of the century, Thomas Wright approached something of the same standing, but he was always only the most prominent amongst a number of musicians rather than the dominant figure represented by Avison.

The clearest conclusion to be drawn from a study of musical activity within the North-East during the eighteenth century is that the region was not isolated from contemporary trends, that it was fully aware, by a variety of means – newspapers, letters and personal contacts – of what was going on elsewhere, and that many musicians made it their

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<sup>26</sup> See Burchell, 'Musical Societies', *passim*.

business to keep in touch with current musical developments and to offer them to their North-Eastern audiences whenever possible. National and international celebrities were brought to the area, the latest music played, and advantage taken of the opportunities London, and elsewhere, offered for training, improvement and information. Some musicians travelled even further, to the Continent, and dancing masters frequently visited Paris, bringing back new dances (and presumably the new music to dance them to). Moreover, through a complex web of networks set up by pupil-teacher relationships and by personal acquaintance and extensive travel, musicians of any standing were constantly in contact, with consequences for the spread of repertoire and new trends.

The relationship with London, though strong, was not uncritical. As the North-East region's rejection of ancient music indicates, audiences and musicians did not accept London trends blindly. Nor was London the magnet to which all musicians were irresistibly drawn; Charles Avison, Miles Coyle, William Herschel, Charles Wilton and others, preferred to leave the metropolis and settle in less fiercely competitive atmospheres. While Roy Porter's view that London was the star in provincial eyes, to be reached for and emulated in all matters, has some foundation therefore, he overstates the case. The relationship between London's musical activity and that of the North-East was more complex than that of a simple teacher-pupil relationship; the pupils had independent minds and were capable of adapting metropolitan fashions to local tastes or rejecting them altogether.

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